

SENATE No.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PRESENTED BY:

Stephen J. Buoniconti

To the Honorable Senate and House of Representatives of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in General Court assembled:

The undersigned legislators and/or citizens respectfully petition for the passage of the accompanying bill:

An Act to promote responsible and effective transitional assistance.

PETITION OF:

NAME:

DISTRICT/ADDRESS:

Stephen J. Buoniconti
James T. Welch

Hampden
6th Hampden

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

In the Year Two Thousand and Nine

An Act to promote responsible and effective transitional assistance.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:

1 SECTION 1: Notwithstanding any general or special law to the contrary the Undersecretary of the
2 Department of Housing and Community Development, in consultation with the Commissioner of the
3 Department of Transitional Assistance, shall make a report detailing recommended regulations to prohibit
4 the practice of housing homeless residents in hotels or motels throughout the commonwealth. These
5 recommended guidelines shall include temporary housing alternatives which provide cost savings to the
6 commonwealth as well as a timeline to eliminate such practice within 1 year. All residents currently
7 being sheltered in hotel or motel accommodations shall be required to have access to food refrigeration as
8 well as kitchen facilities including an oven on the premises; and provided further that no municipality
9 shall house a percentage of homeless individuals in hotels or motels which exceeds twice that
10 communities' percentage of total state population. The report shall be submitted to the clerk of the
11 Senate and clerk of the House of Representatives, along with the House and Senate Committees on Ways
12 and Means no later than 30 days following the passage of this act.

13 SECTION 2: Notwithstanding any general or special law to the contrary, eligible recipients of direct
14 cash assistance shall be prohibited from the use of direct cash assistance funds held on electronic benefit
15 transfer cards for the purchase of alcoholic beverages, tobacco, or lottery products. Further, such funds
16 may not be withdrawn from said cards in the form of cash, but may be expended only through the direct
17 use of the electronic benefit transfer card. The Department of Transitional Assistance shall conduct a
18 monthly review of individual cash assistance usage to ensure conformity with established regulations.
19 Cash assistance funds shall solely be expended by the eligible individual receiving such funds unless such

20 individual can demonstrate a documented medical disability or incapability which requires that an
21 authorized representative be permitted access to such funds on behalf of the eligible individual.

22 SECTION 3: Notwithstanding any general or special law to the contrary, recipients of transitional aid
23 to families with dependent children shall not be considered in compliance with the work
24 requirement by participating in babysitting, home-schooling a child, participating in a substance
25 abuse program while in a substance abuse shelter, participating in the supported work program,
26 participating in vocational rehabilitation services, participating in a housing search while staying
27 in an emergency shelter, participating in post secondary education, college work study, or
28 internships; provided further that a pregnant mother shall be exempt from the work requirement
29 for not more than the last ten days of pregnancy except in the instance of a documented medical
30 reason for exemption; provided further that an unemployed recipient without any documented
31 medical necessity to require otherwise must demonstrate documented evidence of a job search
32 beginning a period not later than 3 months after giving birth; provided further that a participant
33 who gives birth to a child while receiving benefits shall not be exempt from the 24 month time
34 limit requirement as a result of such birth; provided further that a participant shall not be
35 considered exempt from the work requirement as a result of caring for a child not their own and
36 for whom the participant does not receive benefits; provided further that a child over 18 years of
37 age shall not be considered a dependent child for the purposes of this program; provided further
38 that a participant shall be exempt from the work requirement for not more than ninety days
39 following the birth of a child who is not exempt from the family cap or who serves as the
40 caretaker of a child excluded by the family cap; provided further that a participant shall not be
41 considered exempt from the work requirement due to age prior to reaching age sixty five;
42 provided further that a participant shall not be exempt from the work requirement for a period of
43 time more than one year while participating in a GED program; provided further that upon first
44 receiving benefits a participant shall be exempt from the work requirement for not more than
45 thirty days while looking for and starting a qualifying work program activity; provided further
46 that a participant shall not be exempt from the work requirement for performing community
47 service unless the participant can produce documented evidence of the completion of said
48 community service to the Department of Transitional Assistance; provided further that should the
49 Department of Transitional Assistance determine that a program participant lacks basic English
50 proficiency, said participant shall be required to enroll and complete an English language
51 program within a set period of time to be prescribed by the commissioner of the department of
52 transitional assistance.