



October 15, 2019

Senator Joseph Boncore, Senate Chair
Joint Committee on Transportation
State House, Room 112

Representative William Straus, House Chair
Joint Committee on Transportation
State House, Room 134

***RE: Testimony in support of An Act to Provide Identification to Homeless Youth and Families
(Senate Bill 2043/House Bill 3066)***

Dear Chair Boncore and Chair Straus:

I am pleased to submit this testimony on behalf of the Western Massachusetts Network to End Homelessness in support of An Act to Provide Identification to Homeless Youth and Families (Senate Bill 2043/House Bill 3066).

The Western Massachusetts Network to End Homelessness (“Network”) supports collaborative solutions across Hampden, Hampshire, Franklin and Berkshire Counties to prevent and end homelessness through a Housing First approach that makes homelessness **rare, brief and non-recurring**. It includes hundreds of partners from virtually every community sector – housing, child care, health care, education, workforce development – who are committed to making housing stability a reality for all in Western Massachusetts.

The current barriers to obtaining a Massachusetts identification (MA ID) card contribute to ongoing homelessness in Western Massachusetts and beyond. The MA ID is a linchpin to employment, education, financial services and more, all of which impact the ability to obtain and maintain housing. This Act would address those barriers, providing a fee waiver where appropriate and creating an alternative path to establishing residency in MA when a person lacks a physical home. This relatively modest legislative change would open up a world of opportunity previously denied, especially to young adults facing housing instability. It is in the Commonwealth’s interest to support a pathway to housing and employment stability, and this bill is a critical component on that path.

We urge you to favorably report out the Act to Provide Identification to Homeless Youth and Families, and to make it the law of this Commonwealth.

Best,

Pamela Schwartz, Director

Western Massachusetts Network to End Homelessness

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