

HOUSE No. 1774

By Mr. Bosley of North Adams, petition of Daniel E. Bosley for the establishment of a Commonwealth corporation for business, work and learning to provide for a self-sufficiency standard for incomes in the Commonwealth. Labor and Workforce Development.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

In the Year Two Thousand and Seven.

AN ACT TO ESTABLISH A SELF SUFFICIENCY STANDARD IN THE COMMONWEALTH.

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

- 1 *Whereas*, In today’s economy, employers face a shortage of
2 skilled labor;
3 *Whereas*, Lower-wage workers do not earn enough to support
4 their families;
5 *Whereas*, Lack of an adequately prepared workforce can cause
6 employers to turn to workers outside of the Commonwealth;
7 *Whereas*, A skilled labor shortage can have an impact on the eco-
8 nomic strength of the Commonwealth; and
9 *Whereas*, The poverty guidelines as measured by the federal gov-
10 ernment do not adequately reflect the costs of living in Massachu-
11 setts;
12 *Therefore*, It shall be the responsibility of the Commonwealth to
13 define a self-sufficiency standard in order to provide a measure of
14 the extent to which the incomes of households in Massachusetts are
15 sufficient to support the costs of living, working, raising a family,
16 and paying taxes in Massachusetts.

1 SECTION 1. Not later than October 1, 2007, the Commonwealth
2 Corporation, known in this section as the Corporation, shall develop
3 a self-sufficiency standard for the commonwealth, known in this
4 section as the standard. As used in this section, the term “self-suffi-
5 ciency standard,” as defined by Wider Opportunities for Women and
6 The Women’s Union, shall mean the amount of income needed by a

7 family or household to provide for adequate housing, food, child
8 care, health care, transportation and employment-related expenses,
9 and to pay taxes. The Corporation may enter into a contract through
10 the competitive procurement process for the development of such
11 standard.

1 SECTION 2. Such standard shall take into account the family size
2 and age of children, and shall take into account regional variations in
3 the costs of housing and child care, the differential inflation rates
4 that affect the growth of these costs, and the effect of existing tax
5 laws, including state sales tax, payroll taxes, federal and state
6 income tax, child care tax credits and the earned income tax credit.
7 In developing the standard, the Corporation shall rely, to the extent
8 possible, on data reported by the United States Census Bureau,
9 United States Department of Housing and Urban Development and
10 on other data reported to state and federal agencies using standard-
11 ized methodology and shall consult with state departments or agen-
12 cies that serve low-income populations.

13 Housing costs will be determined using fair market rents for
14 apartments as reported by the United States Department of Housing
15 and Urban Development. Child care costs will be determined using
16 average costs for licensed child care facilities, including, but not lim-
17 ited to, family day care, as reported to the Commonwealth's child
18 care resource and referral agencies for children of different ages in
19 different areas of the state.

20 (2) The president of the Commonwealth Corporation shall estab-
21 lish an advisory board to advise the Corporation on all matters
22 relating to the development of a self-sufficiency standard and future
23 revisions to it. The advisory board shall be composed of 25 mem-
24 bers, each of whom shall serve a term of 2 years. The following shall
25 be members of the board: the Secretary of Administration and
26 Finance or his designee, the Director of Labor and Workforce Devel-
27 opment or his designee; the Secretary of Health and Human Services
28 or his designee; the Commissioner of the Department of Revenue or
29 his designee; the Director of Housing and Community Development
30 or her designee; 4 members of the Senate, 3 of whom shall be
31 appointed by the President of the Senate and 1 by the Senate
32 Minority Leader; 4 members of the House of Representatives, 3 of
33 whom shall be appointed by the Speaker and 1 by the House

34 Minority Leader; the Chairman of the Board of Higher Education or
35 his designee; 1 faculty member of a Massachusetts university or col-
36 lege with research expertise in the areas of demographics, living
37 costs and labor markets to be selected by the Commonwealth Corpo-
38 ration; and representatives of the following 10 organizations to be
39 nominated by their respective organizations and selected by the
40 Commonwealth Corporation:— the Massachusetts Family Economic
41 Self-Sufficiency Project; the Massachusetts AFL-CIO; the Associ-
42 ated Industries of Massachusetts; the Massachusetts Association of
43 Community Colleges; the Massachusetts Taxpayers Foundation; the
44 Massachusetts Workforce Boards Association; the Massachusetts
45 Community Action Program Directors' Association; the Women's
46 Educational and Industrial Union; the Citizens' Housing and Plan-
47 ning Association; and the Massachusetts Association of Day Care
48 Agencies.

49 (3) Members of the advisory board shall serve without compensa-
50 tion.

1 SECTION 3. Not later than March 31, 2008, the Commonwealth
2 Corporation shall report the self-sufficiency standard, including the
3 methodology used to arrive at the standard to the clerks of the House
4 of Representatives and Senate, the House and Senate committees on
5 Ways and Means and the Joint Committee on Commerce and Labor.
6 The Standard shall be distributed to each of the state executive
7 offices and state agencies that counsel individuals who are seeking
8 education, training or employment, including, but not limited to, the
9 Executive Office of Health and Human Services, the Department of
10 Labor and Workforce Development, the Department of Transitional
11 Assistance, the Department of Public Health, the Department of
12 Social Services, the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission, the
13 Department of Housing and Community Development, the Depart-
14 ment of Economic Development, the Massachusetts Office of Busi-
15 ness Development, the Office of Child Care Services, the Board of
16 Higher Education, all Workforce Investment Boards and One Stop
17 Career Centers. The standard shall be made available to educational
18 institutions, nonprofit organizations, and the general public upon
19 request. The standard shall also be made available on any internet
20 site established and maintained by the Commonwealth Corporation.

21 (2) Such state agencies and other entities may use the updated
22 standard to assist and guide individuals who are seeking education,
23 training or employment in establishing personal financial goals and
24 estimating the amount of income such individuals may need to sup-
25 port their families.

1 SECTION 4. The standard shall be updated and issued every
2 other year by the Commonwealth Corporation and shall be reported
3 on March 31 in the second year of each sitting of the general court,
4 with the next update on March 31, 2008.

1 SECTION 5. The standard shall not be used to increase the
2 amount of entitlement benefits provided by the Commonwealth,
3 unless enacted by the Legislature and subject to appropriation, and
4 said standard shall not give rise to enforceable legal rights in any
5 party to services or entitlements or an enforceable entitlement to
6 services or benefits not currently provided.