

SENATE No. 43

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PRESENTED BY:

Patricia D. Jehlen

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 prevent homelessness among recipients of transitional assistance.

PETITION OF:

NAME:	DISTRICT/ADDRESS:
Patricia D. Jehlen	Second Middlesex
Martha M. Walz	8th Suffolk
James B. Eldridge	Middlesex and Worcester
Susan C. Fargo	Third Middlesex
Timothy J. Toomey, Jr.	26th Middlesex
Kay Khan	11th Middlesex
Geraldine Creedon	11th Plymouth
Bruce E. Tarr	First Essex and Middlesex
Anthony D. Galluccio	Middlesex, Suffolk and Essex
Thomas P. Kennedy	Second Plymouth and Bristol
Karen E. Spilka	Second Middlesex and Norfolk
Jonathan Hecht	29th Middlesex
Louis L. Kafka	8th Norfolk

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

In the Year Two Thousand and Nine

AN ACT TO PREVENT HOMELESSNESS AMONG RECIPIENTS OF 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.** This act may be known and cited as the No Place Like Home Initiative.

2 **SECTION 2.** Chapter 18 of the General Laws is hereby amended by inserting after section 2A, as
3 appearing in the 2006 Official Edition, the following section:-

4 Section 2B. (a) The department of transitional assistance shall offer and provide screenings of applicants
5 and recipients for services and benefits provided by the department, including but not limited to food
6 stamps, transitional aid to families with dependent children, and emergency aid to the elderly, disabled
7 and children, to determine whether the applicants and recipients are in a stable housing situation or are at
8 risk of homelessness within the next 12 months. The screenings shall be offered at the time of application
9 for assistance, at the time of a recertification or eligibility review, and before termination of assistance by
10 the department. The screenings shall also be available on a walk-in basis at the offices of the department
11 and the availability shall be publicized in each local department office.

12 (b) With regard to applicants or recipients of services and benefits from the department of transitional
13 assistance whose incomes are at or below 130 per cent of the federal poverty limit and who are at risk of
14 homelessness within the next 12 months, the department, subject to appropriation into an item to be

15 established for these purposes, shall provide to both eligible families and individuals the types of services
16 and benefits designed to prevent homelessness and create housing stability that are authorized by
17 subdivision (D) of section 2 as in effect on January 1, 2009 and shall coordinate with and make referrals
18 to other available services, benefits, and housing resources to prevent homelessness and create housing
19 stability. With regard to applicants or recipients of services and benefits from the department of
20 transitional assistance whose incomes are above 130 per cent of the federal poverty limit and who are at
21 risk of homelessness within the next 12 months, the department shall coordinate with and make referrals
22 to other available services, benefits, and housing resources to prevent homelessness and create housing
23 stability.

24 (c) The department shall, at least as frequently as once each calendar quarter, provide to the house and
25 senate committees on ways and means and the joint committee on children, families and persons with
26 disabilities a written report describing the number of applicants and recipients who have participated in
27 the screenings authorized by subsection(a), the number of individuals and families serviced and the types
28 of services and referrals provided pursuant to section (b), and the department's assessment of the level of
29 need for and effectiveness of the services provided pursuant to this section.

30 **SECTION 3.** Notwithstanding any general or special law to the contrary, the department of
31 transitional assistance shall each month deposit into escrow accounts for the benefit of homeless
32 individuals and families receiving assistance under the program of emergency aid to elders, disabled and
33 children, pursuant to chapter 117A of the General Laws, or receiving assistance under the program of
34 transitional aid to families with dependent children, pursuant to chapter 118 of the General Laws, an
35 amount equal to the amount by which the department reduces the grants of said individuals and families
36 due to their lack of shelter expenses. Such escrowed funds shall be available to such individuals and
37 families to obtain and retain permanent housing and to remove barriers to obtaining and retaining housing
38 and shall not be countable toward otherwise applicable asset limits.