ATTACHMENT C

July 28, 2022

To the Honorable Senate and House of Representatives:

Pursuant to Article LVI, as amended by Article XC, Section 3 of the Amendments to the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, I am returning to you for amendment Section 5 of House Bill No. 5050, “An Act Making Appropriations for the Fiscal Year 2023 for the Maintenance of the Departments, Boards, Commissions, Institutions and Certain Activities of the Commonwealth, for Interest, Sinking Fund and Serial Bond Requirements and for Certain Permanent Improvements.”

Section 5 requires the Executive Office of Health and Human Services and the Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development, in coordination with the Executive Office of Education, MassHealth, the Department of Transitional Assistance, the Department of Early Education and Care, and the Department of Housing and Community Development, to develop and implement a secure common application portal for individuals to apply for state-administered needs-based benefits and services. This common portal would enable individuals to apply for multiple services simultaneously, including MassHealth coverage, veterans’ benefits, the supplemental nutrition assistance program, childcare subsidies, housing subsidies, fuel assistance, and other needs-based health care, nutrition, and shelter benefits.

I strongly support the general purpose of this section, as it aligns with an important initiative that is currently underway in this administration. The agencies and secretariats included in the proposed section are currently engaged in collaborative efforts to establish a common application mechanism nearly identical to the portal envisioned by this section. Veterans’ benefits, however, cannot be included among the services accessed through such a common portal, as they are not administered by any state agency – but instead by local veterans’ agencies. Applications for veterans’ benefits must be submitted to localities, and those localities are responsible for disbursing the benefits. Therefore, I am recommending that the requirement to include veterans’ benefits among the services that individuals may apply for through the common portal be struck from the section. In all other respects, I support the proposed section without hesitation.

For this reason, I recommend that Section 5 be amended by striking out the section and inserting in place thereof the following section:-

SECTION 5. Chapter 6A of the General Laws is hereby amended by inserting after section 18Z the following section:-

Section 18AA. Notwithstanding any general or special law to the contrary, the executive office of health and human services and the executive office of housing and economic development, in coordination with the division of medical assistance, the department of transitional assistance, the department of early education and care, the executive office of education and the department of housing and community development, shall develop and implement a secure common application portal for individuals to simultaneously apply for state-administered needs-based benefits and services. The common application shall allow individuals the option to apply simultaneously for MassHealth coverage, the supplemental nutrition assistance program, income supports under chapters 117A and 118, childcare subsidies, housing subsidies, fuel assistance and other needs-based health care, nutrition and shelter benefits. The common application shall, with the consent of the applicant, allow the state agencies responsible for determining eligibility for the benefits requested to share relevant eligibility information and supporting documentation submitted by the applicant as needed to determine eligibility for other benefits.

Respectfully submitted,

Charles D. Baker

 Governor