

SENATE No. 856

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PRESENTED BY:

Brendan P. Crighton

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 adoption of the accompanying bill:

An Act providing upstream homelessness prevention assistance to families, youth, and adults.

PETITION OF:

NAME:	DISTRICT/ADDRESS:	
<i>Brendan P. Crighton</i>	<i>Third Essex</i>	
<i>Joanne M. Comerford</i>	<i>Hampshire, Franklin and Worcester</i>	<i>1/27/2023</i>
<i>Jacob R. Oliveira</i>	<i>Hampden, Hampshire and Worcester</i>	<i>1/27/2023</i>
<i>Jack Patrick Lewis</i>	<i>7th Middlesex</i>	<i>1/30/2023</i>
<i>Sal N. DiDomenico</i>	<i>Middlesex and Suffolk</i>	<i>2/8/2023</i>
<i>Julian Cyr</i>	<i>Cape and Islands</i>	<i>2/8/2023</i>
<i>Jason M. Lewis</i>	<i>Fifth Middlesex</i>	<i>2/14/2023</i>
<i>Carmine Lawrence Gentile</i>	<i>13th Middlesex</i>	<i>2/14/2023</i>
<i>Vanna Howard</i>	<i>17th Middlesex</i>	<i>2/24/2023</i>
<i>James B. Eldridge</i>	<i>Middlesex and Worcester</i>	<i>2/24/2023</i>
<i>Adam Gomez</i>	<i>Hampden</i>	<i>2/24/2023</i>
<i>Michael O. Moore</i>	<i>Second Worcester</i>	<i>3/1/2023</i>
<i>Rebecca L. Rausch</i>	<i>Norfolk, Worcester and Middlesex</i>	<i>3/6/2023</i>

SENATE No. 856

By Mr. Crighton, a petition (accompanied by bill, Senate, No. 856) of Brendan P. Crighton, Joanne M. Comerford, Jacob R. Oliveira, Jack Patrick Lewis and other members of the General Court for legislation to provide upstream homelessness prevention assistance to families, youth, and adults. Housing.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

**In the One Hundred and Ninety-Third General Court
(2023-2024)**

An Act providing upstream homelessness prevention assistance to families, youth, and adults.

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. Chapter 23B of the General Laws is hereby amended by inserting after
2 section 30 the following section:-

3 Section 31. (a) Subject to appropriation, the department of housing and community
4 development shall administer the residential assistance for families in transition homelessness
5 prevention program for households whose incomes are at or below 50 per cent of the area
6 median income and who are at risk of homelessness, eviction, foreclosure or utility shut-off
7 within the next 12 months. For the purposes of this program, to receive cash benefits or other
8 services, it is not necessary for a household to have received a shut-off notice from a utility
9 company, notice to quit or summary process summons and complaint, or otherwise be subject to
10 the summary process pursuant to chapter 239. Risk of eviction, foreclosure and utility shut-off
11 may be determined by certified statements from the landlord, mortgage holder, utility company,
12 or the applicant household verifying outstanding rent, mortgage or utility costs and the

13 household's current inability to pay said fees. The department shall ensure that not less than 50
14 per cent of the funds be provided to households with incomes not greater than 30 per cent of area
15 median income. Eligible households shall include, but not be limited to, families with children
16 under the age of 21, elders, persons with disabilities, and unaccompanied youth. Services and
17 cash benefits under the program shall be made available to households for the prevention of the
18 loss of subsidized or unsubsidized housing. Cash benefits for arrearages shall not exceed the
19 actual liability. Eligible households may receive benefits for short-term rental or utility payments
20 to offset future costs, and to pay for other expenses that otherwise would leave the household at
21 risk of homelessness. Funds from this program shall be available to cover up to 12 months in
22 combined rental arrearage and forward rent payments for eligible households. The department
23 and administering agencies shall make direct payments available to tenants whose landlords are
24 unresponsive or refuse payments. In administering the program, the department shall coordinate
25 with the department of transitional assistance, member agencies and offices of the Massachusetts
26 interagency council on housing and homelessness, and the agencies contracted to administer the
27 residential assistance for families in transition program on behalf of eligible households served
28 by those agencies and offices so as streamline the application process, provide additional support
29 services, and better promote upstream homelessness prevention and housing stability.

30 (b) The department shall annually, on or before December 31, issue a report on the rental
31 and mortgage arrearage assistance program created by this section. The report shall be submitted
32 to the House and Senate Committees on Ways and Means, the Joint Committee on Housing, and
33 the House and Senate Clerks. The report also shall be posted online in a timely manner in a
34 searchable format so that such information is available to the public. The report shall include but
35 not be limited to the following information:

36 (i) the referral source for each household and number of households referred by said
37 source;

38 (ii) the number of applications requested, the number of applications completed, the
39 number of applications approved;

40 (iii) the number of applications rejected and the reasons for denial;

41 (iv) the household income and demographic information for each qualifying household
42 and its members. This information shall be provided by zip code and cumulatively;

43 (v) the monthly rent or mortgage liability for each qualifying household and the amount
44 of each arrearage payment; and

45 (vi) the housing status of each qualifying household at 6, 12, and 24 months after receipt
46 of services or cash benefits.