

COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS  
**MASSACHUSETTS HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**  
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## **PRESS RELEASE**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

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### **REP. GOBI PRAISES THE HOUSE FOR ADDITIONAL WELFARE REFORMS**

**Boston, MA** – "I am pleased with the additional reforms that have been adopted by the House of Representatives to continue to decrease problems in the welfare system while providing avenues for people to reach economic independence." stated Rep. Anne Gobi (D-Spencer) "I expect more reforms to follow but these are all positive steps."

The bill appropriates increased funds for the Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA), including \$3 million to hire additional caseworkers, the Department of Early Education & Care, and the Department of Career Services. In addition to educational programs included in the Pathways to Self-Sufficiency program, the legislation provides an additional \$1 million for the High Demand Scholarship program and requires the DTA to create a financial literacy program regarding the use of benefit cards, bank accounts and savings for higher education.

The legislation aids parents and families in numerous ways including:

- Allocates \$5 million for childcare subsidies for low-income families;
- Makes individuals participating in the Pathways to Self-Sufficiency program eligible for childcare vouchers;
- Strengthens assistance for pregnant teens.

To help welfare recipients maintain economic stability while working towards independence, the bill includes an asset development program that allows individuals to save up to \$5,000 for housing and education. These funds would not be counted against the existing \$2,500 asset limit.

An Act to Foster Economic Independence builds on the House's ongoing commitment to preventing welfare fraud and closing loopholes that incentivize individuals to remain on welfare through numerous provisions:

- Expands the scope of prohibited EBT transactions to include foreign transmittal agencies to prevent the use of EBT cards for international wire transfers;

- Requires the DTA to notify recipients who have not used benefits or have high balances, and subsequently requires the DTA to expunge or recoup funds;
- Codifies regulations mandating that SNAP benefits are for household use only as a means to prevent overseas food shipments;
- Requires the DTA to create a fraud detection program to analyze risk and refer cases to the Bureau of Program Integrity for investigation;
- Requires self-declarations to be signed under the penalties of perjury and prohibits self-declarations from being used as the only verification of eligibility;
- Allows state agencies to disclose tax forms for eligibility determination;
- Reduces the time period that results in a presumption of abandonment of Massachusetts residency.

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