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December 6, 2017

Senator Thomas M. McGee
Senate Chair, Joint Committee on Transportation
State House, Room 109C
Boston, MA, 02133

Representative William M. Straus
House Chair, Joint Committee on Transportation
State House, Room 134
Boston, MA, 02133

**RE: Letter of Support for S.1906/H.2737, *An Act to provide
identification to homeless youth and families***

Dear Chairman McGee, Chairman Straus, and esteemed members of
the Committee,

Massachusetts Appleseed respectfully submits the following testimony
in support of S.1906/ H.2737, *An Act to provide identification to
homeless youth and families* and requests that the Joint Committee on
Transportation give the bill a favorable report.

Massachusetts Appleseed Center for Law and Justice (MA Appleseed)
strives to provide systemic, policy-driven solutions to widespread
social inequalities. As a member of the Unaccompanied Homeless
Youth Commission, one of our identified major social injustices is the
issue of youth homelessness. In the 2016-2017 academic year,
Massachusetts public schools identified and served 21,112 homeless
students.¹ According to the National Conference of State Legislatures
(NCSL), youth between the ages of 12 and 17 are at greater risk of
homelessness than adults and between 20-40% of homeless youth
identifies as LGBTQ. Many homeless youths are also high-school
dropouts and/or survivors of abuse.²

¹"Basic Facts," Massachusetts Coalition for the Homeless,
<https://www.mahomeless.org/about-us/basic-facts>

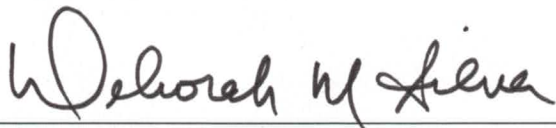
²"Homeless and Runaway Youth," NCSL,
<http://www.ncsl.org/research/human-services/homeless-and-runaway-youth.aspx>

In addition to experiencing housing and often food insecurity, homeless youth are often unable to access broad social services or opportunities as a result of not having proper identification (ID). IDs are often required for a broad range of activities, including applying for employment, accessing public services such as libraries, and/or opening a bank account. However, the cost of obtaining proper identification, or the requirement of parental consent to obtain an ID, often exists as a barrier for homeless youth. As a result, one of the challenges of seeking out housing and social services identified by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Special Commission on Unaccompanied Homeless Youth was "inability to obtain valid ID" as a result of lacking the proper documentation or being unable to pay the prohibitive fee to obtain such identification.³

Senate Bill 1906/House Bill 2737 would help to ease this burden and allow homeless youth to access the opportunities and services they deserve. S.1906/H.2737, sponsored by MA Representative Kay Khan, House Chair for the Joint Committee on Children, Families and Persons with Disabilities, would modify section 8E of chapter 90 of the General Laws in order to include an exception process by which homeless individuals and unaccompanied homeless youths could have the fee to obtain a Massachusetts identification card waived. For the purposes of this bill, homelessness is defined by the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act of 1987, § 103(a), 42 U.S.C. § 11302(a), while a homeless youth is additionally defined as being 24 or younger and not in the "physical care or custody" of a parent or legal guardian.

The effect of this bill would be to reduce one of the many barriers which prevent homeless families and youth from accessing resources and opportunity. For this reason and for all of the reasons detailed above, MA Appleaseed strongly urges the Committee to issue a favorable report for S.1906/H.2737.

Respectfully submitted,



Deborah M. Silva
Executive Director
Massachusetts Appleaseed Center for Law and Justice

CC: Members of the Joint Committee on Transportation

³"Report to the Great and General Court, Executive Office of the Governor, and the Office of the Child Advocate," pp.36, The Commonwealth of Massachusetts Special Commission on Unaccompanied Homeless Youth, <http://www.mass.gov/eohhs/docs/eohhs/cyf/uhy032013.pdf>