



MASSACHUSETTS
COALITION
FOR THE HOMELESS



Everyone Needs ID: Take Action to Provide Identification to Youth and Adults Experiencing Homelessness

Please cosponsor and actively support House Bill 3388, House Bill 3360, and Senate Bill 2251, An Act to provide identification to youth and adults experiencing homelessness

Sponsored by Representative Jim O'Day, Representative Kay Khan, and Senator Robyn Kennedy

House Bill 3388, House Bill 3360, and Senate Bill 2251, An Act to provide identification to youth and adults experiencing homelessness would:

- Establish a fee waiver process for youth and adults experiencing homelessness seeking standard Mass IDs
- Create a process for individuals experiencing homelessness to apply for standard Mass IDs if they cannot meet the existing criteria by allowing ID applicants who are experiencing homelessness to submit residency documentation from providers of homelessness and/or youth services and state agencies under the Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS)

Importance of this legislation: Obtaining a state identification card is a critical first step for youth and adults experiencing homelessness to accomplish typical life tasks and access opportunities. ID is required for a broad range of life activities, such as:

- Applying for housing and employment
- Enrolling in education programs
- Getting a library card
- Picking up mail or packages from the post office
- Opening financial accounts
- Entering certain government buildings
- Accessing essential services
- Interacting with law enforcement

Unfortunately, there are significant barriers to accessing IDs for people experiencing homelessness, especially youth and young adults. In the most recent Massachusetts Youth Count, conducted in the spring of 2022 and released in March 2023, the Commission on Unaccompanied Homeless Youth further explored barriers that unaccompanied young people under the age of 25 faced in accessing needed resources and services. The survey found that many young people identified not having an ID or lacking key documents as a barrier to accessing services they needed, including 22% of young people who reported facing barriers to accessing cash assistance, 22% seeking nutritional assistance, 19% seeking health care, 17% seeking employment, 16% seeking long-term housing, and 16% seeking shelter or transitional housing.¹

In the previous Massachusetts Youth Count, conducted in the spring of 2021, the Commission found that of the 265 young people under the age of 25 responding to the survey who met the state's definition of being an unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness, 28% identified not having an ID or lacking key documents as a barrier to accessing services they needed. The percentage was higher for several key subpopulations of youth and young adults: 40% of young people experiencing homelessness who had a history of justice system involvement; 38% of young people experiencing homelessness who were doubled up with family members or friends at the time of taking the Youth Count survey; 35% of young people experiencing homelessness who were unsheltered at the time of taking the Youth Count survey; and 33% of young people experiencing homelessness who identified that they had ever exchanged sex to meet basic needs.²

With the implementation of the REAL ID Act across the country, many states have recognized the need for an alternative identification card accessible to people experiencing homelessness. Sixteen states and the District of Columbia already offer free or reduced fee IDs for people experiencing homelessness, and 6 states offer free or reduced fee IDs specifically

¹ Massachusetts Commission on Unaccompanied Homeless Youth. (2023). Massachusetts Youth Count 2022. <https://tinyurl.com/yc22report>. Most recently accessed November 30, 2023.

² Massachusetts Commission on Unaccompanied Homeless Youth. (2022). Massachusetts Youth Count 2021. <https://tinyurl.com/yc21report>. Most recently accessed November 30, 2023.

for youth experiencing homelessness.³ It is time for Massachusetts to step up and join those states that are addressing this issue, especially at a time when the Commonwealth's severe housing crisis complicates achieving housing stability for families and individuals experiencing homelessness.

Legislative sponsors/cosponsors of the Everyone Needs ID bill: As of December 19th, the bill has been sponsored or cosponsored by Representatives O'Day (sponsor), Khan (sponsor), Arena-DeRosa, Armini, Arriaga, Ashe, Blais, Cataldo, Connolly, Decker, Doherty, Domb, Donaghue, Donahue, Duffy, Farley-Bouvier, Garballey, Garry, Gentile, Higgins, Holmes, Honan, Howard, Kushmerek, LeBoeuf, Lipper-Garabedian, Madaro, Montaña, J. Moran, Murray, Reyes, D. Rogers, Sabadosa, Tyler, and Ultrino, and Senators R. Kennedy (sponsor), Collins, Comerford, DiDomenico, Eldridge, Gomez, Lovely, Rausch, Velis, and former Senator Gobi.

Statewide organizational endorsers of the Everyone Needs ID bill: As of December 19th, the bill has been endorsed by Abby's House, Alliance of Cambridge Tenants, Allston Brighton Health Collaborative, American Civil Liberties Union of Massachusetts, Berkshire Housing, Boston Health Care for the Homeless Program (BHCHP), Brazilian Women's Group, Breaktime, Bridge Over Troubled Waters, Catholic Charities Worcester County, Central Massachusetts Housing Alliance, Children's League of Massachusetts, Citizens for Affordable Housing in Newton Development Organization, Inc. (CAN-DO), Citizens for Juvenile Justice, Community Action Agency of Somerville, Inc., Community Service Network, Inc., Cooperative Metropolitan Ministries, Coordinated Response Team with the Mayor's Office – City of Boston, Disability Law Center, Dismas House, Duffy Health Center, Faith Leaders for Housing Justice, Fall River Comprehensive Treatment Center, Family Health Center of Worcester, Family Promise North Shore Boston, Father Bill's & MainSpring, Fenway Health, First Church Shelter, Franklin County DIAL SELF Inc., Friends of Boston's Homeless, Greater Boston Legal Services, Grow Food Northampton, Housing Families, Inc., JRI Health, Justice Center of Southeast MA, Justice 4 Housing, JVS Boston, Lazarus House Inc., League of Women Voters of Massachusetts, LEO, Inc., Massachusetts Appleseed Center for Law and Justice, Massachusetts Coalition for the Homeless, Massachusetts Commission on LGBTQ Youth, Massachusetts Housing & Shelter Alliance (MHSA), Massachusetts Immigration and Refugee Advocacy Coalition, Massachusetts Law Reform Institute, Mass Senior Action Council, Matthew Aronson Consulting, Mayor's Office of Returning Citizens – City of Boston, MLPB, My Life My Choice, Northeast Justice Center, One Family, On the Rise, Opportunity Communities, LLC., Out Now, Park Avenue Congregational Church, Prisoners' Legal Services of Massachusetts, Poor People's United Fund, Progressive Massachusetts, Roca, Inc., Rosie's Place, Safe Passage, School on Wheels of MA, SeniorCare Inc., Somerville Community Corporation, Southeast Center for Independent Living, Springfield Youth Against Homelessness, St. Clare of Assisi Catholic Community, Stop Bullying Coalition, Sweet Scents, Temple Sinai of Sharon, Inc., The Center for Teen Empowerment, The Haven Project, The Mayor's Office of Human Services in the City of Boston, United South End Settlements, United Way of Greater Fall River, Uniting Citizens for Housing Affordability in Newton (U-CHAN), Vasquez Mary Kay, Western Massachusetts Network to End Homelessness, YWCA Cambridge, and Y2Y Network.

Bill history: The three bills were filed in January 2023 and assigned to the Joint Committee on Transportation between February and March 2023. The committee heard the bills on June 13, 2023. Senate Bill 2251 was sent to the Senate Committee on Ways and Means and promptly passed the Senate unanimously on July 27, 2023. That version is now awaiting action in the House Committee on Ways and Means. In each of the last three legislative sessions (starting in 2017), the Joint Committee on Transportation and Senate Committee on Ways and Means reported out favorably similar versions of the Mass ID access bill and the full Senate unanimously passed the bills.

Please actively support swift passage of the #EveryoneNeedsID Mass ID Access bill to increase access for people experiencing homelessness to standard Mass IDs.

For more information, please contact Kelly Turley at the Massachusetts Coalition for the Homeless:
kelly@mahomeless.org or 781-595-7570 x17.

- Last updated December 19, 2023

³ Movement Advancement Project. November 2022. The ID Divide: How Barriers to ID Impact Different Communities and Affect Us All. <http://www.mapresearch.org/id-documents-report>. Most recently accessed November 30, 2023.