



An Act to Provide Identification to Homeless Youth and Families

Senate Bill 1906/House Bill 2737

Sponsored by Senator Harriette Chandler and Representative Kay Khan

Bill Sponsors and Cosponsors:

Representatives Cory Atkins, Ruth B. Balsler, Michael D. Brady, James M. Cantwell, Marjorie C. Decker, Michelle M. DuBois, Sean Garballey, Paul R. Heroux, Kay Khan, Kenneth I. Gordon, Kevin G. Honan, John J. Lawn, Jr., David Paul Linsky, Elizabeth A. Malia, James J. O'Day, David M. Rogers, Byron Rushing, Chynah Tyler, and Chris Walsh; *Senators* Harriette L. Chandler, Julian Cyr, James B. Eldridge, and Jason M. Lewis.

Bill Status:

Both Senate 1906 and House Bill 2737 have been assigned to the Joint Committee on Transportation. The House version of the bill is scheduled for a hearing on November 13, 2017.

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 jobs
- Enrolling in education programs
- Getting a library card
- Picking up a package from the post office
- Opening financial accounts
- Entering certain government buildings
- Accessing services
- Interacting with law enforcement

Unfortunately, there are significant barriers to accessing IDs for people experiencing homelessness, with some service providers estimating that half of their clients lack identification cards.¹

With the implementation of the REAL ID Act across the country, states have recognized the need for an alternative identification card accessible to people experiencing homelessness, especially youth, who may lack the documentation necessary to obtain a REAL ID-compliant card. Thirteen other states currently offer free or reduced fee cards for individuals experiencing homelessness, and a growing number offer clear alternative criteria for individuals experiencing homelessness who cannot demonstrate proof of address.²

It is time for Massachusetts to step up and join those states that are addressing this issues. Senate Bill 1906/House Bill 2732 would:

- Establish a fee waiver process for youth and adults experiencing homelessness
- Create a process for individuals experiencing homelessness to apply for IDs if they cannot meet the existing criteria, such as alternative proof of Massachusetts residency that does not require a permanent address (looking to documents already accepted by other Massachusetts state agencies)

¹ Hussey, H. (2015). Expanding ID Card Access for LGBT Homeless Youth. Center for American Progress. <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/lgbt/reports/2015/10/01/122044/expanding-id-card-access-for-lgbt-homeless-youth/>

² Mirza, S., Soto, S. and Rooney, C. (2016). State ID Card Policies for LGBTQ Youths Experiencing Homelessness. Center for American Progress. <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/lgbt/reports/2016/09/28/144928/state-id-card-policies-for-lgbtq-youths-experiencing-homelessness/>

How you can help:

- Ask your State Senator and Representative to actively support the bill, and to share their support with legislative leadership. Senators still can sign on to S.1906.
- Reach out to organizations to request that they officially endorse the bill. See the current list below. If you can add your organization, please complete this short form: <https://goo.gl/forms/i3XwOvqnk8xgS5Rl3>
- Share personal or professional stories of youth, families, and individuals who have had trouble accessing identification. Please reach out to Kelly Turley (kelly@mahomeless.org) with your testimony.

Organizational Endorsers

Allston-Brighton Health Collaborative
Bridge Over Troubled Waters
Cambridge and Somerville Housing and Welfare Coalition
Domus Incorporated
Father Bill's & Mainspring
First Church Shelter, Cambridge
Homeless Prevention Council of Lower Cape Cod
Homeless Youth Providers Engaging Together
LUK, Inc.
Massachusetts Appleseed Center for Law and Justice
Massachusetts Coalition for the Homeless
Massachusetts Commission on LGBTQ Youth
Massachusetts Housing and Shelter Alliance
MassEquality
Samaritans Steps
School on Wheels
Wayside Youth & Family Support Network
Western Massachusetts Network to End Homelessness
Y2Y Harvard Square

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



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