



Y2Y Harvard Square is a student-run overnight shelter for young adults experiencing homelessness. Y2Y endorses **Senate Bill 1906** and **House Bill 2737**, “An Act to Provide Identification to Homeless Youth and Families,” because of its relevance to the young adults we serve.

### Y2Y’s Identification Services

Y2Y Harvard Square offers ID services to our guests in need of new or replaced Massachusetts IDs, birth certificates, Social Security cards, driver’s licenses/permits, and passports, or name changes and gender marker changes to existing IDs. Our ID services were designed understanding the importance of having identification for young adults experiencing homelessness and the barriers they may face in acquiring IDs. Not only do we have student resource navigators and ID clinic volunteers from Harvard Law School to help our guests navigate the process, we also cover all ID application costs for our young adults, thanks to funding from the MA Commission on LGBTQ Youth.

During Y2Y’s second season (Oct. 15, 2016 – Apr. 15, 2017), 12 guests successfully applied for and received a Massachusetts ID, 7 had incomplete or unconfirmed applications, and 6 others expressed a need for identification yet did not begin an application with Y2Y. Though the reasons behind incomplete or unattempted applications vary, we know that, anecdotally, the logistical barriers to acquiring IDs – such as the requirement for providing multiple proofs – are pervasive. These numbers do not include the young adults who only stay with us briefly, such that we were unable to offer our services in a meaningful way.

Despite the logistical and financial assistance that Y2Y Harvard Square offers our guests, a significant number of them still face significant barriers that prevent them from acquiring a Massachusetts ID. Senate Bill 1906 and House Bill 2737 are of utmost relevance and importance for individuals experiencing homelessness, including those who rely on Y2Y.



## Testimonies from Young Adults

Below, we included four testimonies by young adults who have stayed at Y2Y, expressing why having an ID is important to them and why the current process is unrealistic for young adults experiencing homelessness. All testimonies were asked to be anonymous.

*#1: "I tried to go a month with an expired ID, and I couldn't do anything. I couldn't get a library card. I went to CVS to get some prescription meds that I needed and I couldn't even get those, just because my ID was expired. I ended up getting it renewed finally – this was two years ago – but I had to pay the fee out-of-pocket. It's hard when you're homeless because you have to wait patiently until you can manage to save the money."*

*#2: "When I'm out and about, I feel a lot safer with an ID on me, knowing that I can rely on it if I ever need it or feel unsafe. There are also just a lot of services that you can't get without an ID, and a state ID is a lot easier and safer to carry around compared to a birth certificate or a Social Security card. I've had to apply for mine twice. The second time was for a replacement because my wallet got stolen. Even though I applied with [Partner Agency] I still had to pay out of my pocket, and it was hard difficult with all the documents I had to collect."*

*#3: "Getting your ID is the first step in your life – one of the first major steps in your life is getting forms of ID. Having to gather a bunch of documents that you don't have because you're homeless, or because they got lost, stolen, or left behind – it's a huge barrier. Having to sit in a chaotic room for 3 hours is a big barrier. If we can make the process easier, why don't we? People always talk about getting jobs, but you need identification to accept a job. If you don't have that piece of plastic, you can't get a job. I need that piece of plastic to live. I need that piece of plastic to feel like a human."*

*#4: "\$25 isn't an impossible amount to get, but it's a huge barrier. I'd rather support myself with food rather than use those \$25 to get a piece of plastic that's going to come in 2 weeks. A homeless person has to spend \$25 and wait 2 weeks for something that will theoretically come in the mail rather than spend it? That's paradoxical."*