



Everyone Needs ID:

An Act to Provide Identification to Youth and Adults Experiencing Homelessness

Senate Bill 2276 (redrafted as Senate Bill 2612) and House Bill 3515

Sponsored by Senator Harriette Chandler, Representative Kay Khan, and Representative Jim O'Day

Lead Sponsors: Senator Harriette Chandler, Representative Kay Khan, and Representative Jim O'Day

Senate Cosponsors: Senators Jo Comerford, Sal DiDomenico, Adam Hinds, Eric Lesser, Joan Lovely, Michael Moore, Susan Moran, Patrick O'Connor, and Walter Timilty; and **House Cosponsors:** Representatives Brian Ashe, Ruth Balsler, Natalie Blais, Linda Campbell, Daniel Carey, Josh Cutler, Carol Doherty, Mindy Domb, Patricia Duffy, Carolyn Dykema, Tricia Farley-Bouvier, Dylan Fernandes, Sean Garballey, Carmine Gentile, Jessica Giannino, Carlos González, James Hawkins, Natalie Higgins, Kevin Honan, Vanna Howard, Michael Kushmerek, David LeBeouf, Jack Patrick Lewis, David Linsky, Kate Lipper-Garabedian, Adrian Madaro, Liz Malia, Paul Mark, Joe McGonagle, Paul McMurty, Brian Murray, Tram Nguyen, Steven Owens, David Robertson, Lindsay Sabadosa, Jon Santiago, Danillo Sena, Tom Stanley, Steve Ultrino, Erika Uyterhoeven, Tommy Vitolo, Susannah Whipps, and Bud Williams

Bill History: Both Senate Bill 2276 and House Bill 3515 were refiled in January 2021, and were reported out favorably by the Joint Committee on Transportation in November 2021. Senate Bill 2276 was sent to the Senate Committee on Ways and Means, and emerged with minor language tweaks as Senate Bill 2612 on January 10, 2022. The full Senate voted unanimously (39-0) in support of the bill on January 13, 2022. Both Senate 2612 and House Bill 3515 are awaiting action by the House Committee on Ways and Means. In the 2017-2018 and 2019-2020 legislative sessions, versions of the Mass ID access bill also were passed unanimously by the Senate.

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 previously estimating that half of their program participants lack identification cards.¹ In the most recent Massachusetts Youth Count, conducted in the spring of 2021, preliminary data shows 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, especially youth, who may lack the documentation necessary to obtain a REAL ID-compliant card. A growing number of states, such as California, Connecticut, Georgia, Illinois, Michigan, Nevada, New Jersey, North Carolina and South Carolina³, currently offer free or reduced fee cards for individuals experiencing homelessness, and many offer clear alternative criteria for individuals experiencing

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/>. Most recently accessed January 11, 2022.

² The Massachusetts Youth Count 2021 report is scheduled to be released by the Massachusetts Commission on Unaccompanied Homeless Youth in early 2022.

³ Wiltz, T. (2017). Without ID, Homeless Trapped in Vicious Cycle. Pew Trusts. <https://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/blogs/stateline/2017/05/15/without-id-homeless-trapped-in-vicious-cycle>. Most recently accessed January 11, 2022.

homelessness who cannot demonstrate proof of address.⁴ New York State now offers free IDs for people participating in cash assistance programs, the Supplemental Security Income program (SSI), the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and medical assistance programs.⁵

It is time for Massachusetts to step up and join those states that are addressing this issue, especially at a time when the ripple effects of the COVID-19 pandemic further complicate access to housing and resources for families and individuals experiencing homelessness. This bill 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 services and state agencies under the Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS)
- Expand upon the Registry of Motor Vehicles' efforts to better serve people experiencing homelessness⁶

Everyone Needs ID: An Act to Provide Identification to Youth and Adults Experiencing Homelessness Organizational Endorsers, as of March 2022

Abby Kelley Foster House, Inc. (Abby's House)
ACLU of Massachusetts
Action for Boston Community Development
Alfonso Dwight Claxton Foundation, Inc.
Allston Brighton Health Collaborative
Arise for Social Justice
Boston Area Rape Crisis Center
Boston Health Care for the Homeless Program (BHCHP)
Boston Homeless Solidarity Committee
Breaktime United, Inc.
Catholic Charities Worcester County
Central Massachusetts Housing Alliance
Central West Justice Center
Church of the Covenant, Boston
Citizens for Juvenile Justice
Community Action Agency of Somerville, Inc.
Disability Policy Consortium
Eliot CHS
Family Health Center Worcester
Father Bill's & MainSpring, Inc.
Fenway Health
First Church Shelter
Franklin County DIAL/SELF, Inc.
Hildebrand Family Self-Help Center
Homeless Empowerment Project
Homes for Families

HomeStart, Inc.
Justice 4 Housing
Living In Freedom Together (LIFT)
LUK, Inc.
Massachusetts Appleseed Center for Law & Justice
Massachusetts Coalition for the Homeless
Massachusetts Commission on LGBTQ Youth
Massachusetts Fair Housing Center
Massachusetts Housing & Shelter Alliance
Massachusetts Law Reform Institute
Matthew Aronson Consulting
North Shore Boston Family Promise
On with Living and Learning, DBA OWLL
One Family
Pine Street Inn
Progressive Massachusetts
Rosie's Place
Springfield No One Leaves
Springfield Youth Action Board
Stavros Center for Independent Living
Tapestry Health
The Health Foundation of Central Massachusetts
United Way of Massachusetts Bay and Merrimack Valley
Western Massachusetts Network to End Homelessness
Worcester Interfaith
Y2Y Network

Please actively support 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.**



⁴ 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/>. Most recently accessed January 11, 2022.

⁵ See New York State Department of Motor Vehicles' "Get a non-driver ID card": <https://dmv.ny.gov/id-card/get-non-driver-id-card-ndid>. Most recently accessed January 11, 2022.

⁶ See <https://www.mass.gov/guides/rmv-real-id-info-center#homeless-individuals->. Most recently accessed January 11, 2022.