HOUSE . . . . . No. 1388

By Mr. Flaherty of Cambridge, petition of Charles F. Flaherty for legislation to create economic opportunity for low income citizens of the Commonwealth and relative to regulating the use of federal block grants for such purpose. Federal Financial Assistance.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

In the Year One Thousand Nine Hundred and Eighty-Four.

AN ACT CREATING ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY FOR LOW INCOME CITIZENS OF THE COMMONWEALTH.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:

1 Chapter 23B of the General Laws is hereby amended by striking
2 out section twenty-four and inserting in place thereof the follow-
3 ing: —
4 *Section 24.* It is the policy of this state to help further the full
5 economic and social development of each of its citizens so that they
6 can contribute to the strength of the state as a whole. The resources
7 of the private sector of the economy in particular, along with the
8 resources of the public and voluntary sectors, should be employed
9 to increase the opportunities for all people, young and old, minori-
10 ty and non-minority, to develop to their fullest economic and social
11 potential. It is the purpose of this section to strengthen, supplement
12 and coordinate efforts that further these policies.
13 (a) As used or referred to in this section the following words
14 shall, unless the context requires otherwise, have the following
15 meanings: —
16 "Community action agency", a private nonprofit agency which
17 has previously been designated by and authorized to accept funds
18 from the federal Community Services Administration for com-
19 munity action agencies under the Economic Opportunity Act of
20 1964 or such similar agency as is recognized as a community action
21 agency by the division for an area not covered by any other such

22 agency, which maintains a corporate board structure of one third
23 public officials, one third private sector volunteers, and one third
24 democratically selected representatives of the poor, with no fewer
25 than fifteen members and no greater than fifty-one members. The
26 number of such agencies shall not exceed twenty-five. In order to
27 qualify as such an agency, a program must be one which is com-
28 munity based and operated and which: —
29 (i) May include or is designed to include a sufficient number of
30 projects or components to provide, in sum, a range of services and
31 activities having a measurable and potentially major impact on
32 causes of poverty in the community or those areas of the communi-
33 ty where poverty is a particularly acute problem (ii) has been
34 developed, and which organizes and combines its component proj-
35 ects and activities in a manner appropriate to carry out all the
36 purposes of this section (iii) includes one or more programs to
37 assist participants, including the elderly poor to; secure and retain
38 meaningful employment, attain an adequate education; provide
39 and maintain adequate housing and a suitable living environment;
40 receive energy assistance and weatherization services; obtain
41 emergency assistance through loans or grants to meet immediate
42 and urgent individual and family needs, including the need for
43 health services, nutritious food, housing and employment-related
44 assistance; remove obstacles and solve personal and family prob-
45 lems which block the achievement of self-sufficiency; and achieve
46 greater participation in the affairs of the community.
47 "Division", the Division of Social and Economic Opportunity of
48 the Department, or any successor thereto.
49 "Poverty level population", the number of people whose total
50 household income is below the poverty line established by the
51 federal government, or the Commonwealth of Massachusetts,
52 whichever is higher.
53 (b) The provisions of this section shall be applicable to the
54 awarding of contracts by the division under the federal community
55 services block grant or its successor.
56 No less than ninety percent of the total community services
57 block grant funds received by the State shall be contracted directly
58 with community action agencies. No more than five percent of the
59 total community services block grant funds received by the State
60 shall be allocated to the division for its administrative expenses. No

61 more than five percent of the total Community Services Block
62 Grant funds received under the Community Services Block Grant
63 under this act shall be awarded by the division to innovative
64 programs which a) received financial assistance from the Com-
65 munity Services Administration under Section 221 or Section
66 222(a)(4) of the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 in the federal
67 fiscal year 1981, or b) provide community economic development
68 activities or c) provide programs for seasonal workers.

69 The Commonwealth, acting by and through the division, shall
70 enter into contracts with community action agencies, innovative
71 programs, and seasonal worker programs for the provision of
72 services consistent with the purposes of this section; provided
73 however, that each such organization agrees to furnish the division
74 with a workplan adopted by the board of such agency and agrees to
75 report to the Commonwealth annually, through an independent
76 audit concerning the use of these funds.

77 The Commonwealth, acting by and through the Division, may,
78 subject to appropriation, provide supplementary funds to com-
79 munity action agencies for the purposes of this section.

80 Recognition of a community action agency by the Division of
81 Social and Economic Opportunity shall not preclude the agency
82 from receiving other grants or contracts from federal or local
83 agencies, private organizations, individuals or state agencies, in-
84 cluding the Division of Social and Economic Opportunity or its
85 successor thereto, and subject to appropriation for that purpose
86 the Division may also enter into contracts with community action
87 agencies to provide other services.