

By Mr. Walsh, a petition (accompanied by bill, Senate, No. 141) of Marian Walsh, Frederick E. Berry, Stephen F. Lynch and other members of the General Court for legislation to define a self-sufficiency standard to provide a measure of extent household incomes are sufficient for living costs in the Commonwealth. Commerce and Labor.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

In the Year Two Thousand and One.

AN ACT TO ESTABLISH A SELF-SUFFICIENCY STANDARD IN MASSACHUSETTS.

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

1 SECTION 1. Chapter 23 of the General Laws, as appearing in  
2 the 1998 Official Edition, is hereby amended by inserting after  
3 section six the following new section:

4 Section 6A. (a) *Whereas* in today's economy, employers face a  
5 shortage of skilled labor;

6 *Whereas* lower-wage workers do not earn enough to support  
7 their families;

8 *Whereas* lack of an adequately prepared workforce can cause  
9 employers to turn to workers outside of the Commonwealth;

10 *Whereas* a skilled labor shortage can have an impact on the  
11 economic strength of the Commonwealth; and

12 *Whereas* the poverty guidelines as measured by the federal gov-  
13 ernment do not adequately reflect the costs of living in Massachu-  
14 setts;

15 *Therefore* it shall be the responsibility of the Commonwealth to  
16 define a self-sufficiency standard in order to provide a measure of  
17 the extent to which the incomes of households in Massachusetts  
18 are sufficient to support the costs of living, working, raising a  
19 family, and paying taxes in Massachusetts.

20 As used in this section, "self-sufficiency standard" shall mean  
21 the amount of income needed by a family or household to provide

22 for adequate housing, food, child care, health care, transportation  
23 and employment-related expenses, and the payment of taxes.

24 (b) No later than October 1, 2001 the Corporation for Business,  
25 Work and Learning (“the Corporation”) shall contract with an  
26 appropriate research unit or organization that has prior experience  
27 in conducting a self-sufficiency standard for Massachusetts to  
28 develop a self-sufficiency standard (“the standard”). The standard  
29 shall be developed using methods and data sources similar to  
30 those used in the self-sufficiency standard for Massachusetts pub-  
31 lished in 1998 by Wider Opportunities for Women and the Wom-  
32 en’s Educational and Industrial Union. The standard shall be  
33 determined according to family size and age of children, and shall  
34 take into account regional variations in the costs of housing and  
35 child care, the differential inflation rates that affect growth of  
36 these costs, and the effect of existing tax laws, including state  
37 sales tax, payroll taxes, federal and state income tax, child care  
38 tax credits and the earned income tax credit.

39 In developing the standard said research unit or organization  
40 shall rely to the extent possible on data reported by the United  
41 States Census Bureau, United States Department of Housing and  
42 Urban Development, and on data reported to state and federal  
43 agencies using standardized methodology, and shall consult with  
44 state departments or agencies that serve low-income populations.  
45 Housing costs will be fair market rents for apartments as reported  
46 by the United States Department of Housing and Urban Develop-  
47 ment. Child care costs will be average costs for licensed child care  
48 facilities and family day care homes as reported to the Common-  
49 wealth’s child care resource and referral agencies for children of  
50 different ages in different areas of the state.

51 (c) An advisory board shall be established by the president of  
52 the Corporation for Business, Work and Learning, the purpose of  
53 which shall be to advise the Corporation on all matters relating to  
54 the development of a self-sufficiency standard and future revi-  
55 sions to it. The advisory board shall be composed of fifteen indi-  
56 viduals, each of whom shall serve a term of two years. Members  
57 of the advisory board shall be selected by the Corporation, subject  
58 to the following requirements:

59 — one member shall represent the Department of Labor and  
60 Workforce Development;

- 61 — one member shall represent the Executive Office of Health  
62 and Human Services;
- 63 — one member shall represent the Department of Housing and  
64 Community Development;
- 65 — one member shall represent the Joint Committee on Com-  
66 merce and Labor;
- 67 — one member shall be a representative of the Massachusetts  
68 Family Economic Self-Sufficiency Project;
- 69 — one member shall be a representative of the Massachusetts  
70 AFL-CIO;
- 71 — one member shall be a representative of Associated Indus-  
72 tries of Massachusetts;
- 73 — one member shall be a representative of the Board of Higher  
74 Education;
- 75 — one member shall be a representative of the Massachusetts  
76 Association of Community Colleges;
- 77 — one member shall be a representative of the Massachusetts  
78 Taxpayers Foundation;
- 79 — one member shall be a representative of the Massachusetts  
80 Workforce Boards Association;
- 81 — one member shall be a representative of the Massachusetts  
82 Community Action Program Directors Association;
- 83 — one member shall be from a Massachusetts university or col-  
84 lege with research expertise in the areas of demographics, living  
85 costs and labor markets;
- 86 — one member shall have expertise in the area of statewide  
87 housing advocacy; and
- 88 — one member shall have expertise in the area of child care  
89 programs.

90 Members of the advisory board shall not be compensated. Nec-  
91 essary expenses incurred by members of the advisory board to  
92 carry out their duties as such shall be reimbursed by the Corpora-  
93 tion, and adequate staff shall be provided to the advisory board so  
94 that it can perform its functions effectively.

95 (d) No later than March 31, 2002 the Corporation shall report  
96 the self-sufficiency standard in writing to the Legislature, the  
97 House and Senate Committees on Ways and Means and the Joint  
98 Committee on Commerce and Labor. The Corporation shall also  
99 make the standard available to each of the state executive offices

100 and agencies including, but not limited to, Executive Office of  
101 Health and Human Services, the Department of Labor and Work-  
102 force Development, the Department of Transitional Assistance,  
103 the Department of Public Health, the Department of Social Serv-  
104 ices, the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission, the Depart-  
105 ment of Housing and Community Development, the Department  
106 of Economic Development, the Massachusetts Office of Business  
107 Development, the Office of Child Care Services, the Board of  
108 Higher Education, all Workforce Investment Boards and One Stop  
109 Career Centers.

110 Said agencies may use the standard in the development of poli-  
111 cies to assist working families and to assist and guide individuals  
112 who are seeking education, employment and training; who are  
113 seeking permanent housing; and who are establishing personal  
114 financial goals and estimating the amount of income needed to  
115 support themselves and their families.

116 The standard shall be made available to educational institu-  
117 tions, nonprofit organizations, and the general public upon  
118 request. The standard shall also be made available on any internet  
119 site established and maintained by the Corporation.

120 (e) The Standard shall be updated and issued every other year  
121 by the Corporation and shall be reported on March 31st in the  
122 second year of each sitting of the Legislature, with the next update  
123 on March 31, 2004.