

By Ms. O'Brien of Hanover, petition of Janet W. O'Brien and other members of the House relative to education and training for recipients of public welfare. Human Services and Elderly Affairs.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

In the Year One Thousand Nine Hundred and Ninety-Seven.

AN ACT RELATIVE TO EDUCATION AND TRAINING FOR WELFARE RECIPIENTS.

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 one hundred and eighteen of the Mass. General Laws,
2 as recently amended by chapter five of the acts of nineteen
3 hundred and ninety-five, is hereby amended by adding, at the end
4 of the fourth paragraph of subsection (f) of section one hundred
5 and ten, the following paragraphs:—

6 In order to prevent disruptions and relapses in the transition to
7 permanent employment and financial independence, to promote
8 security and well-being for the children who are recipients, and in
9 order to promote job growth and economic development, the
10 department shall implement, as part of a policy of education,
11 higher education, training, skills development and employment
12 opportunities for recipients, an evaluation measure to assess and
13 determine the employability and educational levels of recipients
14 who either request educational opportunities or those who are
15 determined to be eligible by the department. Said evaluation shall
16 be included either as part of the employment development plan set
17 forth in subsection (h) of this chapter, or through other objective
18 assessment and screening measures. Once enrollees are deter-
19 mined as a result of the evaluation, to be eligible for programs of
20 education, training and employment opportunities, learning pro-
21 grams, and higher education, and are accepted into such programs,
22 the department shall enable said recipients to enroll in programs

23 of one year or less through not more than four years, or to enroll
24 in and complete programs requiring completion beyond two years,
25 and pursue coursework, studies and training to completion, with
26 continuation of all eligible benefits for themselves and their chil-
27 dren, so long as recipients maintain adequate grades and appro-
28 priate progress in the program with specific objectives of
29 permanent employment and independence from public assistance
30 for the family.

31 Once educational studies and coursework responsibilities are
32 completed by the recipient, all requirements of this chapter
33 regarding transition to employment and termination of public
34 assistance, shall apply.

35 The department shall incorporate, as part of the evaluation, a
36 scale of required work hours per week of not less than five or
37 more than twenty, to be determined by consideration of factors
38 including, but not limited to, number of school-age and younger
39 children, number of courses and study hours required, availability
40 of child care, housing and living conditions, supplemental studies,
41 training or skills development needed by the individual, and other
42 such factors that shall be considered in determining the full or par-
43 tial or reduced hours required for work or community service pro-
44 grams. Any recipient who is enrolled in said programs, and who
45 requests additional work time as part of their coursework or
46 training, or in addition to their coursework and training, for any
47 number of hours per week up to or surpassing the work require-
48 ments as set forth in this section, shall be permitted to do so.

49 In order to promote conditions of and opportunities for inde-
50 pendence from public assistance and the advancement of employ-
51 ability for recipients, the department shall develop rules and
52 regulations that are consistent with this section.