



Testimony submitted to the Joint Committee on Children, Families and Persons with Disabilities
In support of S.70 - An Act Promoting Financial Stability and Asset Development
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The League of Women Voters of Massachusetts and of the United States have supported programs that meet the basic human needs of individuals and families for over forty years. Specific policies and programs that the League supports include those designed to promote self-sufficiency and help children and families get out of poverty.

A critical stepping stone for low-income individuals is getting the kind of education or training that will prepare them for jobs that pay enough to support themselves and their children. Since most of the recipients of transitional aid to families with dependent children (TAFDC) are young women with children, there will never be a better time to help them with whatever level of skills they need to advance toward good-paying jobs. The Department of Transitional Assistance should make it possible to start where individual clients are and guide them toward English language skills, adult basic education, vocational programs, high school or college – whatever meets their individual needs to prepare for actual jobs in their communities. The months they are receiving aid and subject to work requirements are not well-spent if they are no more prepared for the world of work when they are terminated than when they entered the program.

The steps outlined in S.70 are a common-sense design to inform clients of available educational programs that don't require debt to access, and counseling to help them meet work requirements. Funds appropriated for vocational education should be used for a full range of skills development that meets the real world needs of TAFDC families. Those needs may include time extensions to complete a program when people are working hard and making progress. Work study and other educational grants should not be counted to reduce the aid they receive for living expenses.

When persons are otherwise eligible for emergency aid to elders, disabled persons and children (EAFDC), a resource limit should not disqualify them. In addition, the League supports Individual Asset Accounts that will assist those receiving aid in moving on to true independence and not cycling back to other forms of state or charitable assistance.

The League of Women Voters of Massachusetts asks members of the Joint Committee on Children, Families and Persons with Disabilities to vote favorably on “An Act Promoting Financial Stability and Asset Development (S.70) and to do everything that you can to make it the law in Massachusetts.