



In Support of S.35 and H.114  
An Act Regarding Pathways to Family Economic Self-Sufficiency

Testimony submitted to the Joint Committee on Children, Families and  
Persons with Disabilities

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The League of Women Voters of Massachusetts (LWVMA) urges your support for S.35 and H.114 - An Act Regarding Pathways to Family Economic Self-Sufficiency.

The League of Women Voters of the United States and of Massachusetts 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.

The League believes the Commonwealth should be focusing more of its resources on long term solutions on behalf of poor families and "An Act Regarding Pathways to Family Economic Self-Sufficiency" is a realistic way to do so.

The pilot Pathways program established under S.35 and H.114 targets a critical population of families with dependent children who have already received state aid due to a demonstrated lack of resources. Education and/or training for the responsible adults which leads to jobs with income levels that can actually support their families are the most effective way to stop poverty with this generation.

Several aspects of the criteria for the pilot program are commended:

- The pilot program will provide a continuum of services to help participants choose wisely and sustain their efforts to completion. This avoids false starts and dropping out that wastes money and needlessly discourages people who already have an uphill battle to make it in life.
- The pilot program is expected to work with the actual situations of adults in poverty who often must learn English or do remedial study before entering higher education or job training.
- Provision is made for coaching, transitions to full-time work and emergency financial assistance, which should increase the completion rate of participants.
- The pilot program is directed to maximize private, public and philanthropic resources, including funding and in-kind services. This is a necessary condition for overcoming the silo-mentality that often excludes those who are most in need of what is being offered.
- Evaluation of the pilot program is built into the design so that success can be replicated and problems corrected.

Because it is needed most where there are the fewest existing opportunities, the League would recommend the Pathways pilot program be initiated in those areas of the state that have been most impacted by the recent economic downturn. Perhaps preference could be given to a proposal that will locate its sites in areas of high unemployment.

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 Regarding Pathways to Family Economic Self-Sufficiency (S.35 and H.114) and do everything that you can to make it the law in Massachusetts.