

**Testimony of Naomi Meyer, Senior Attorney, Welfare Law Unit
To the Joint Committee on Elder Affairs**

**In Support of
An Act relative to assisting elders and people with disabilities in the Commonwealth,
S. 2039 (Jehlen)/H. 2077 (O'Day)**

October 10, 2017

The Welfare Law Unit of Greater Boston Legal Services (GBLS) appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony, on behalf of our clients, in support of S. 2039/H. 2077. GBLS is a non-profit organization that provides free civil legal assistance to low-income people in Boston and thirty-one additional cities and towns. Every year, GBLS serves hundreds of families and individuals that need subsistence cash benefits, including Emergency Aid to the Elderly, Disabled and Children (EADEC).

Section 1 of this bill would provide full EAEDC grants (maximum \$303.70 per month for an individual) to participants experiencing homelessness by eliminating the homelessness penalty. Under current rules, individuals who do not pay for shelter costs are eligible for only \$92.80 per month. This absurdly tiny amount is not enough to cover even basic necessities, such as clothing, toiletries, and transportation, much less to save the money needed to obtain housing.

Sections 2 and 4 of this bill provide for modest but desperately-needed increases to the typical EAEDC grant, which has not been increased since 1988. Specifically, section 4 would increase the EAEDC grant to equal the TAFDC grant provided to a household of the same size; thus, a household of one person could receive up to \$428 per month (if the \$40 rent allowance is included). While still well below the federal poverty level of \$1,005 for one person, this amount would help EAEDC recipients to meet their basic needs. Section 2 provides for an annual cost-of-living increase to the EAEDC grant so it would not lose much of its value to inflation again, as happened over the last 29 years.

Section 3 of this bill would align the EAEDC asset limit with that of the TAFDC program by raising the EAEDC limit from \$250 to \$2500 and excluding the first \$15,000 of a vehicle's value from being counted. Current rules, which allow participants to have no more than \$250, make it impossible for them to save up for important goals, such as first and last month's rent and security deposit to get an apartment.

We strongly urge the Committee to support S.2039/H.2077. Please contact me with any questions about this testimony at nmeyer@gbls.org or 617-603-1621. Thank you for your consideration.