



PAX CHRISTI – BEVERLY
c/o 5 Prospect St., Beverly, MA 01915

September 17, 2019

**SUPPORTING S356/H621 – AN ACT RELATIVE TO ASSISTING ELDERS
AND PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES IN THE COMMONWEALTH**

To the Co-Chairs of the Joint Committee on Elder Affairs: Senator Patricia Jehlen,
and Representative Ruth Balser and members of this Committee:

When I worked at the Massachusetts Coalition for the Homeless, I had the opportunity to meet with shelter providers in New Bedford and Fall River, probably about five years ago. I remember hearing about this particular case of a gentleman at the shelter who was receiving EAEDC benefits who was then denied them because he had gone over the \$250 asset limit.

This particular gentleman had a serious heart defect and was unable to keep a steady job because he never knew if he would have to go to the emergency room because of his heart disease. He began to receive EAEDC benefits until he could get on SSDI. One thing was clear to him. He wanted to do all in his power to save the money for his first last months for where ever his new home would be. Somehow, in spite of his reduced benefits of \$90.00 a month because of the homelessness penalty at the time (I am so glad that this was changed in the EAEDC line item for this year) -- any way, he managed to save about \$500 toward this! I don't think he was aware of the \$250 asset limit at the time.

A case worker from the Dept. of Transitional Assistance sat down with him to review his case. He was so excited to tell her that he had managed to save that amount toward his next apartment by doing odd temporary jobs here and there! What determination. Unfortunately, the DTA worker told him he was now ineligible for EAEDC because he had gone over the \$250 asset limit, and would be cut off from this program that very day... What an affront to his basic human dignity!

Can you imagine the shock on his face? What would you have done if you had been in his shoes? I don't know what this gentleman did after that. If he continued on saving his money in spite of this news of no \$90 EAEDC benefit; if he gave up altogether, or even if this news sent him to yet another visit to the ER because of the added stress to his heart. This story certainly underlines the importance of raising the asset limit to \$2500.

I am here today on behalf of Pax Christi – Beverly, who has endorsed this EAEDC Campaign and supports these Bills. Pax Christi Beverly MA is part of Pax Christi USA/International which strives to become an anti-racist, multicultural, Catholic movement for peace with justice and is guided by the spirituality of nonviolence. We advocate in particular, for issues involving economic, interracial, ecological justice, and human rights. Thus we endorse the EAEDC Campaign.

Approximately 19,000 EAEDC participants, who are among the most vulnerable people in our Commonwealth are crying out in their need for: an increase in the monthly grant amount to \$428; an annual cost of living adjustment, an increase in the asset limit to \$2500; and putting into state law the removal of the homelessness penalty for EAEDC participants that is now reflected in the State FY 19 Budget. We believe in light of Catholic Social teaching that those with the greatest need have the single most urgent claim on society's resources, and should be attended to first - not last. Pax Christi Beverly is urging the Joint Committee on Elder Affairs to move Senate 356/House 621- *An Act Relative to Assisting Elders and People with Disabilities in the Commonwealth* forward as soon as possible. Justice requires this. Thank you.

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