

# Please Urge Your Representative NOT to Sign Onto the O'Connell-Holmes Impractical, Costly and Unconstitutional EBT Bill

**The bill allows TAFDC and EAEDC recipients to get only 30% of their monthly benefits in cash.** The rest of the benefit could only be accessed by buying at stores that accept the card or by assigning the payments to certain vendors.

TAFDC benefits average \$475 a month. EAEDC benefits average \$325 a month. Families who cannot get their benefits in cash will not be able to pay rent, utilities, and meet their other daily expenses for which cash is needed, including transportation, school activity fees, and child care. The vendor that manages EBT reported to the EBT Commission there is no current mechanism to limit the amount of the benefit that is paid in cash and that it would be prohibitively costly to do so. **The EBT Commission rejected a proposal to limit the amount of the benefit that would be paid in cash.**

**The bill requires DTA to implement a vendor payment system for the cashless paying of rent.**

DTA's current rules provide for voluntary vendor payments to landlords and utilities and mandatory vendor payments in cases of mismanagement. But DTA does not have the staff to manage its current vendor payment responsibilities and frequently landlords and utilities don't get paid even though the money has been deducted from the family's benefits. In one sample quarter, \$40,000 in vendor payments was withheld from recipients and never paid to landlords and utilities. Vendor payments are not practical for the many families who are doubled up or the many families who move frequently. **Reps. O'Connell and Holmes didn't ask the EBT Commission to vote on mandatory universal vendor payments.**

**The bill bars the use of EBT for cash in any state other than Massachusetts or a border state.**

99% of cash benefits are withdrawn in Massachusetts or a border state. Recipients may go out of state to visit a sick relative, to accompany a child on a class trip, or for some other legitimate purpose. DTA closes any case where the recipient is absent from the state for more than 60 days. The vendor that manages EBT reported to the EBT Commission that barring purchases in non-border states would require Massachusetts to get retailers in other states to refuse to accept EBT—an expensive proposition to prohibit 1% of purchases. Prohibiting recipients from accessing their benefits out of state would violate the constitutional right to travel. **The EBT Commission rejected a proposal to bar access to benefits out of state.**

**The bill would require a photo ID on EBT cards.**

There is no evidence that a photo ID helps to prevent fraud. DTA estimated that a photo ID requirement would cost \$8.4 million in the first year and \$4.4 million each year after that. This could potentially affect both cash and SNAP recipients. Federal law bars grocery stores and supermarkets from asking for EBT photo ID if they do not ask for photo ID from other customers. **The Commission decided not to pursue photo ID.**

**Please call your Representative today. Urge your Representative NOT to sign onto the O'Connell – Holmes "Anti-EBT Bill."**

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