

April 25, 2019

A Victory for Children: Massachusetts Lifts the Cap on Kids

In a final vote by the Senate, the Massachusetts Legislature overrides Governor Baker's Veto of Legislation to Lift the Cap on Kids



With an override vote by the Massachusetts Senate today, Massachusetts has repealed the state's family cap law, also called the Cap on Kids. Since 1995, the Cap on Kids has denied welfare benefits to children conceived while, or soon after, a family began receiving cash assistance benefits. As a result of the Cap on Kids, Massachusetts has been denying benefits to over 8,700 children living in deep poverty. The Coalition to Lift the Cap on Kids, comprised of 125 organizations, is led by legal services partners Massachusetts Law Reform Institute (MLRI) and Greater Boston Legal Services (GBLS).

"Today, with a final vote by the Senate, Massachusetts made the right decision for the Commonwealth's children and families by Lifting the Cap on Kids," said Georgia Katsoulomitis, Executive Director, Massachusetts Law Reform Institute. "Since its inception, MLRI has made it our mission to advocate on behalf of our most vulnerable populations - for

low-income individuals, families and communities. We have been proud to partner with Greater Boston Legal Services and join our coalition members to Lift the Cap on Kids."

"We are thrilled that our Commonwealth has repealed the cruel and unjust family cap," said Jacquelynne Bowman, Executive Director of Greater Boston Legal Services. This is an important step in helping Massachusetts act on the promise of supporting very low-income families to meet their children's basic needs."

The Coalition to Lift the Cap on Kids worked with legislative leaders to repeal the Cap on Kids, met with the majority of legislators to answer their questions about the policy, and held events and briefings to educate legislative staff and the public about the Cap on Kids and its harmful effects on children and families.

"Lifting the Cap on Kids will make a critical difference in the lives of 8,700 of the lowest income children in Massachusetts," said Deborah Harris of the Massachusetts Law Reform Institute.

"With today's vote, Massachusetts has affirmed the dignity and humanity of every child. We cannot express enough our thanks to the courageous families who spoke out about the hardship

their children suffered because of the Cap on Kids policy; the organizations who contributed their time, wisdom, and perspectives to the repeal effort; and the legislators who worked tirelessly to eliminate this punitive law.”

“We are deeply grateful to everyone who committed their time, energy and passion for justice to Lifting the Cap on Kids. This change will have a real impact on so many GBLS clients, as well as families throughout the state,” said Naomi Meyer of Greater Boston Legal Services. “One hundred dollars a month can make the difference in whether struggling families can afford diapers, warm clothes, and other basic necessities for their kids.”

Until today Massachusetts was one of only 16 states - including Arkansas, Mississippi, and North Carolina – that still have a Cap on Kids. With today’s vote Massachusetts becomes the ninth state to repeal a welfare family cap rule.