

# Massachusetts Senate Restarting Push For Homeless ID Cards

Michael P. Norton  
State House News Service

After last session's effort died in the House, the Massachusetts Senate is taking another run at the idea of creating a process for homeless individuals to apply for official state identification cards.

The Senate Ways and Means Committee on Monday approved legislation (S 2612) requiring the Registry of Motor Vehicles to create Massachusetts identification card application process for a person who is homeless. Under the bill, the fees associated with obtaining an ID card would be waived but applicants would be required to "submit proof of residency by providing documentation satisfactory to the registrar from a homeless service provider or from a department, division, office or agency of the Executive Office of Health and Human Services that provides services to the individual," according to a bill summary.

The Senate put the bill on its calendar for Thursday, when its passage appears likely. The Senate in February 2020 unanimously approved a similar bill which died without a vote in the House Ways and Means Committee. During debate on the bill in 2020, its chief sponsor Sen. Harriette Chandler of Worcester said ID cards are essential for everyday life and a building block for success, but the fees and bureaucracy associated with obtaining cards are viewed as insurmountable by homeless individuals.

A study commissioned by the state identified nearly 4,000 unaccompanied homeless youth across the state in 2018,

Chandler said, identifying that group as a population that would benefit from ID cards in order to apply for jobs, enroll in schools, open bank accounts and do other things “that we all take for granted.”