



**Remarks of Jason Ewas, Director of the Economic Mobility Lab
Joint Committee on Children, Families and Persons with Disabilities
March 5, 2019**

As prepared for delivery

Chairperson Chang-Diaz, Chairperson Khan, and members of the Committee. My name is Jason Ewas, and I am the Director of the Economic Mobility Lab at the City of Boston. On behalf of Mayor Martin J. Walsh, I am here to testify in support of H.104/S.37, An Act to Lift the Cap on Kids, sponsored by Rep. Marjorie Decker and Senator Sal DiDomenico.

Mayor Walsh is part of a large coalition of diverse stakeholders who have led the campaign to lift the cap. He thanks them for building a movement over the last several years.

The Economic Mobility Lab, which emerged from the City's Resilience Strategy, is a team of social entrepreneurs centrally located in the Mayor's Office of Policy. We research and test promising ideas that have the potential to dramatically increase upward economic mobility.

One of our focus areas, in partnership with the Mayor's Office of Women's Advancement, is child care. Massachusetts, and Boston in particular, has one of the highest average child care costs in the country. Many child care workers, who are mostly women and mostly people of color, live below the poverty line.

For families, lack of access to child care means that parents may have to turn down a job offer or the chance to accept a higher paying job.

The more resources we can provide to caregivers, or for parents to pay for child care, the better the situation will get. This is one reason we advocate for lifting the cap on kids.

While the Economic Mobility Lab is focused on municipal government, we also think it is essential to advocate for policy changes at all levels of government.

As part of our initial research, including in-depth interviews with residents, we identified the welfare system as a crucial starting point for improvement.

The Department of Transitional Assistance has made significant progress through its economic mobility policy changes. Working with the Legislature, Massachusetts recently raised the asset cap. While this is a positive start, we must continue to make changes that benefit families.

Lifting the cap on kids would have an immediate impact. Massachusetts currently denies benefits to close to 9000 children because of the cap on kids, many of whom live in the City of Boston.

Most states don't currently have a family cap or similar policy. Seven states have repealed them in recent years.

As federal policy is making it more difficult for working people to get ahead, Massachusetts should lead in creating a system that provides pathways to economic security.

The process of working towards a better system begins by rooting out policies that harm children and families. I see no better starting point for creating an improved safety net than lifting the cap on kids.

Lifting the cap will support the economic mobility of children and their caregivers. It also represents important progress towards creating a social safety net rooted in dignity.

In closing, I thank you for the opportunity to speak and urge you to expeditiously move H.104 favorably out of your Committee to get this bill before the entire Legislature for a vote.