

The Honorable Ann-Margaret Ferrante, Chair
Joint Committee on Economic Development
and Emerging Technologies
State House Room 42
24 Beacon Street Boston, MA 02133

The Honorable Eric P. Lesser, Chair
Joint Committee on Economic Development
and Emerging Technologies
State House Room 410
24 Beacon Street Boston, MA 02133

The Honorable Aaron M. Michlewitz, Chair
House Committee on Ways and Means
State House Room 243
24 Beacon Street Boston, MA 02133

The Honorable Michael J. Rodrigues, Chair
Senate Committee on Ways and Means
State House Room 212
24 Beacon Street Boston, MA 02133

The Honorable Donald H. Wong,
(Ranking Minority)
Joint Committee on Economic Development
and Emerging Technologies
State House Room 42
24 Beacon Street Boston, MA 02133

The Honorable Patrick M. O'Connor,
(Ranking Minority)
Senate Committee on Ways and Means
State House Room 212
24 Beacon Street Boston, MA 02133

CC:

The Honorable Robert A. DeLeo
Speaker of the House
State House Room 356
24 Beacon St. Boston, MA, 02133

The Honorable Karen E. Spilka
Senate President
State House Room 332
24 Beacon St. Boston, MA, 02133

Dear Honorable Conference Committee Members,

The undersigned Massachusetts advocacy groups write to urge you to keep S2734/H4694, An Act relative to fairness in debt collection (or the Debt Collection Fairness Act (DCFA)), within the text of S.2842/H.4887, An Act enabling partnerships for growth as you conference the Senate and House versions of the bill.

Amendment #129 sponsored by Senator Jamie Eldridge was included within S.2842 and we respectfully request that language be included in the final version of An Act enabling partnerships for growth.

The DCFA was reported favorably by the Joint Committee on Financial Services and enjoys broad support from the Massachusetts advocacy community as evidenced by recent letters ([House letter](#), [Senate letter](#)) from 43 groups ranging from the Massachusetts AFL-CIO, to the United Way of Massachusetts Bay and Merrimack Valley to the Massachusetts Association for Community Action (MASSCAP).

Even before the pandemic and current economic crisis, 20% of Bay Staters had a debt in collections--rising to 39% in communities of color--and debt buyers and other creditors have filed over 9500 collection lawsuits against vulnerable Massachusetts residents in state courts since March 1st.

With the Commonwealth's unemployment rate [the highest in the nation](#), a tsunami of collection lawsuits on defaulted debt is on its way.

The DCFA will soften the blow faced by low income people and communities of color, as well as the Commonwealth's economy, by, among other things:

1. **Protecting more wages from seizure by creditors**--protecting adequate wages keeps families from falling into poverty.
2. **Reducing the interest rate on judgments on consumer debt**--rates are currently the highest in the nation at 12%, making it impossible for many to ever pay off debts.

The DCFA also makes clear that **no one in the Commonwealth shall be imprisoned for failure to pay a consumer debt**--in 2016 four Massachusetts small-claims courts issued [1,325 civil arrest warrants](#).

The inclusion of the DCFA in *An Act enabling partnerships for growth* will strengthen the bill. Consumer protections like those in the DCFA are powerful and necessary economic development and recovery tools that will help keep consumers in their homes, in their cars, able to return to work, and able to invest their wages in their local businesses and communities.

If you have any questions, please email Michael Best at the National Consumer Law Center (mbest@nclc.org).

Respectfully,

ACLU of Massachusetts
Action for Equity
Boston Builds Credit
Boston Tax Help Coalition
Boston Tenant Coalition
Boston Ujima Project
Center for Social Justice, WNE School of Law
Charles Hamilton Houston Institute for Race and Justice
Chelsea Collaborative
Children's HealthWatch
Economic Mobility Pathways (EMPath)
Ecumenical Social Action Committee, Inc.
Greater Boston Legal Services, on behalf of its low-income clients
Heading Home Inc.
Jewish Alliance for Law and Social Action
Jewish Community Relations Council
Legal services Center of Harvard Law School
LISC Boston
MA Association of Community Development Corporations
Main South CDC
Massachusetts AFL-CIO
Metro Housing|Boston
National Consumer Law Center, on behalf of its low-income clients
Strong Women In Action SWIA
Union of Minority Neighborhoods Citizens Congress on Poverty's Unemployment Project
United Way of Massachusetts Bay and Merrimack Valley
Urban Edge
Worcester Community Action Council