

MEDIA ADVISORY



For Immediate Release

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The Economic Pathways MA Coalition and the Atlanta Fed Launch EPICC to Help Massachusetts Workers Achieve Economic Self-Sufficiency

The Economic Pathways MA Coalition and the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta will launch the Economic Pathways Income Cliff Calculator (EPICC) dashboard, the realization of a statewide partnership formed to help workers advance their careers while transitioning from public benefits. **EPICC will launch at the monthly Economic Pathways MA Coalition meeting on October 19 at 3 p.m. (ET). The meeting is open to the media.**

The EPICC dashboard helps individuals, employers, and policymakers understand which in-demand career pathways will lead to self-sufficiency and mitigate the potential loss of public assistance (sometimes known as a benefits cliff) based on their income, residence, career goals, and family dynamics.

“Cliff effects are a major barrier to economic security,” said Anne Kandilis, Director of Springfield WORKS. “This is a significant step where innovative tools can help Massachusetts residents achieve economic gains without fear of losing basic safety nets like food, housing, and affordable childcare. Further, these tools will help drive policy solutions that remove systemic barriers to ensure that pathways to opportunity are open and accessible to all.”

EPICC was developed by the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta in coordination with the Western Massachusetts Economic Development Council, Springfield WORKS, The Food Bank of Western Massachusetts, Baystate Health, MassHire Hampden County Workforce Board, MA Department of Transitional Assistance, and MA Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development. It is based on the Atlanta Fed’s Career Ladder Identifier and Financial Forecaster, on which the EPICC tool is modeled on, is part of its Advancing Careers for Low-Income Families initiative, which conducts research on benefits cliffs and develops tools to support community and state efforts to improve economic security for families and meet the talent needs of businesses for a healthy economy.

“Integration of the benefits cliff tool in EPICC will help workforce development professionals gain insight into what an actual career pathway looks like as a worker enters and elevates in a profession,” said David

Altig, executive vice president and director of research at the Atlanta Fed. "It can help inform decisions, reduce uncertainty, and ensure everyone has an opportunity to participate fully in our economy."

EPICC can produce reports that show how the loss of public assistance intersects with local in-demand career paths. The calculator shows the financial trade-offs associated with career advancement and the net gains to the Commonwealth when workers advance. It also simulates policy and programmatic solutions.

"So many people who face food insecurity are trapped in the cycle of poverty because of the very real fear of losing housing, childcare, and SNAP benefits," said Laura Sylvester, Public Policy Manager for the Food Bank of Western Massachusetts. "EPICC provides a powerful visual calculator for people to be able to plan for a career pathway toward self-sufficiency. We're grateful to the Atlanta Fed for their commitment to eradicating cliff effects and for their customization of this tool for our Commonwealth."

Because public assistance programs are complex, workers may struggle to understand the timing and magnitude of benefits loss. Coupled with economic insecurity, this uncertainty can prevent individuals from actively seeking career opportunities, and those who advance without knowing when assistance will end can find themselves in a situation where their standard of living doesn't improve, or even declines.

"As we transition out of the economic downturn caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, EPICC will help us understand how lack of coordination between state and federal benefits and inflexible earnings caps can prevent women and communities of color from being able to advance in careers," said Massachusetts State Representative (Holyoke), Patricia Duffy. "It will also provide a powerful tool that illustrates the consequences and return on investment for different policy solutions. "

More information on the EPICC tool, including a demo, will be available on the [Economic Pathways MA Tools and Research website](#).

Contact [Anne Kandilis](#) or [Laura Sylvester](#) with questions and log on credentials for the October 19 meeting of the Economic Pathways MA Coalition.



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The Food Bank of Western Massachusetts believes that everyone has a right to healthy food regardless of their circumstances. Serving Berkshire, Franklin, Hampden and Hampshire counties, The Food Bank leads the region's emergency food network, distributing nutritious food to households with lower incomes. Since 1982, they have been providing individuals facing hunger with the food they need to survive and leading communities towards long-term solutions to food insecurity by addressing its underlying causes. They are committed to creating a Western Massachusetts where no one goes hungry, and everyone has access to nutritious food. For more information, visit foodbankwma.org.



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