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EDITORIAL: Better living through job help

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Year after year, the news is the same: it's expensive to live in Massachusetts. Just to cover bare bones costs, a mother with two children needs to earn \$58,133, according to the latest version of the Family Economic **Self-Sufficiency Standard**, just released by the Crittenton Women's Union, a local nonprofit organization. First compiled in 1998, the standard has been a public policy alarm clock, repeatedly ringing a reminder that families across the state aren't earning as much as they need.

Think rents are high? Look at child care. While the **self-sufficiency standard** budgets \$1,300 a month for Boston's housing costs, it sets city child care prices for two young children at \$1,500. Together, that's 58 percent of a budget that also includes food, transportation, health care, taxes, and miscellaneous expenses.

Costs won't fall. And poor families face hunger, neglected healthcare, and evictions. So parents have to raise their incomes.

This is, in part, a job for public policy makers and organizations. They can create more paths to prosperity. To fill this need, Crittenton is developing a promising "hot jobs" web site. Set to launch in March, the site will list high-paying jobs, training programs that take two years or less, and information about financial aid. The strategy is to battle low wages with good information.

One hot jobs recommendation is to be a plumber, pipe fitter, or steamfitter. The website lists their average earnings at \$56,560 and links to the website for Women in the Building Trades, a nonprofit organization that offers a number of training programs. The web site also links to community colleges and to the Benjamin Franklin Institute of Technology, which

features career programs on its home page, including marine technology and pharmacy technology programs.

Crittenton's site will feature newer jobs in fields like healthcare and information technology and expose women to non traditional careers such as auto repair. Adding a human touch, the site will feature blogs written by women who are pursuing new careers.

The website is sound and needed outreach, a bridge that stretches from sitting on the couch not knowing how to get ahead all the way to picking and pursuing a career.

"We want to be a good, old-fashioned matchmaker," says Crittenton's head, Beth Babcock. And she notes that while Crittenton serves women, both women and men can use the website.

This promising effort can't stand alone. Government's job is to do much more for workers, from improving public school education to expanding training for adults, including vulnerable groups such as high school dropouts, single mothers, and older workers.

Massachusetts needs more public efforts and more public/private partnerships.

Finding a job that pays shouldn't be left to chance.