




From Hawaii to Florida, Massachusetts Welfare Recipients See the U.S.A.

Massachusetts welfare recipients, including  illegal migrants, are spending their taxpayer-funded benefits in ritzy tourist meccas in Hawaii, Florida, and the Virgin Islands, the [Boston Herald](#) revealed Tuesday.

Maridav/iStock/Getty Images Plus
Waikiki Beach

Via a public-records request, the *Herald* obtained data from the Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA) showing when, where, and how much Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) cardholders spent during fiscal year 2024. In that year, the DTA disbursed a whopping \$3 billion in state and federal assistance to some one million people — about one in six Massachusetts residents, according to a June “Performance Scorecard” published by DTA Commissioner Jeff McCue.

Traveler’s Checks

The newspaper found that “welfare recipients travel to just about every state in the country,” cashing in their benefits wherever they go.

During FY2024, welfare recipients made 32 purchases in Hawaii, 5,014 miles away from Massachusetts. According to the *Herald*:

The single largest expenditure ... in Hawaii was \$378 in March of this year in Kahului on the island of Maui.

Another \$351 was spent in Hilo, a region on the big island of Hawaii blessed with “dramatic waterfalls, fertile rainforests and blooming gardens,” in January. EBT money was also used in Honolulu, Pearl City, Princeville, Waikoloa, and Captain Cook according to the EBT data-entry list.

Princeville is known for “master-planned homes and condos on the north shore of the island of Kauai,” according to websites.

Captain Cook is a very similar spot and is famous for snorkeling and jungle hiking — giving visitors an “unspoiled Hawaii feeling,” one site states. The town is named after famed British explorer Captain James Cook, who was killed there.

“This makes no sense. It’s insanity and government at its worst,” Republican state Senator Ryan Fattman told the paper.

“What the hell is someone doing in Hawaii? We need this money to help feed families,” he said. “This tells me there’s a major problem with this system.”

Take the Money and Run

Fattman believes people show up in Massachusetts, apply for benefits, and then skedaddle, taking Bay Staters’ (and, to be fair, other Americans’) dollars with them. That, the *Herald* claims, is “a massive drag on the budget,” especially when the money is spent outside New England.

“We need to take care of the veterans, homeless kids, teachers, fire victims and those who suffered a



Written by [Michael Tennant](#) on September 9, 2024

medical setback first,” Fattman averred, “not people who walk off a plane or a bus who come to Massachusetts and leave.”

To that end, he’s introduced legislation to require people to have lived in the state for at least a year before receiving welfare.

The *Herald* also found 15 EBT withdrawals in the Virgin Islands, the largest being \$116, and 17 in Alaska, including \$395 in Anchorage and \$217 in Wasilla, where Sarah Palin served two terms as mayor. Massachusetts welfare benefits were also spent in 165 cities and towns in California and 293 in Florida. About the only place they *weren’t* spent is in foreign countries, where such expenditures are forbidden; the paper said “no records were introduced to show if anyone tried” to violate the prohibition.

“While it’s understandable that people travel to visit family, the magnitude of the travel raises the question as to whether all the people receiving benefits actually need the benefits,” Mary Connaughton, director of government transparency at the Boston-based Pioneer Institute for Public Policy Research, told the *Herald*.

The DTA told [Fox News](#) in a statement that public assistance is only available to individuals with “an annual income that is at least 200 percent below the federal poverty level.” It added:

State and federal laws regulate what can be purchased with benefits and where purchases can be made, and any out-of-state usage beyond approved temporary absences can result in an individual no longer receiving assistance due to not meeting Massachusetts residency requirements.

Migrant Shirkers

The question, then, is not just whether everyone getting welfare is eligible for it, but also whether the DTA is monitoring where assistance is being spent — and taking appropriate action when recipients violate the rules.

There is good reason to doubt that it is. DTA bureaucrats, after all, aren’t spending their own money, and thus have little interest in ensuring that it is disbursed appropriately.

Furthermore, Massachusetts is a very liberal state where Democrats practically have free rein. In fact, state officials care so little about how taxpayer dollars are spent that, according to Fox News:

Massachusetts is a [sanctuary state](#) and allows migrants access to these welfare programs. An estimated 50,000 illegal immigrants have flocked to the state since 2021.

A recent report from The Center for Immigration Studies projected that the state’s migrant crisis would cost taxpayers \$1.8 billion over the next two years.

Migrants are eligible for food stamps provided by the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), Medicaid, and other public services. *Migrants can access these programs even while the federal government prohibits access to such programs.* [Emphasis added.]

On top of that, the state has an existing program that provides emergency assistance for housing payments into which resettlement agencies are trying to enroll migrants. And it has a pilot program



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that, the *Herald* reported, “draws \$8 million in funding from a pot of \$10 million already set aside for resettlement agencies to help up to 400 families find long-term housing by the end of this year.”

But why bother? It appears the DTA is already resettling migrants — in other states.



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