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**Senate of Pennsylvania**  
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The Honorable Beverly D. Mackereth  
Acting Secretary  
Department of Public Welfare  
333 Health & Welfare Building  
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Dear Secretary Mackereth:

Following the horrific terrorist attack that occurred during the Boston Marathon, the Boston Herald recently published a story regarding oversight of public assistance programs in Massachusetts (see attached article). Specifically, the article reported that alleged marathon bombers Tamerlan and Dzhokhar Tsarnaev and their family received welfare benefits from the state in excess of \$100,000. Even more troubling is that while out of the country for over six months, Tamerlan Tsarnaev continued to receive welfare benefits, all while he and his family were on the Federal Terrorist Watchlist.

The findings from the Senate's 2010 State Government Management and Cost Study Commission identified several ways the Commonwealth could save tax dollars within the Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare. Over the past few years the Department has done an improved job in weeding out some of the waste, fraud and abuse in our welfare system.

However, this article sheds light on several new issues, raising additional questions. How can an individual leave the country for six months and still receive public benefits? How did the brothers afford such a lavish lifestyle with international trips to Russia while receiving public benefits?

Obviously, known or suspected terrorists should not be receiving any type of taxpayer funded benefit. We would like to know what protections are currently in place in Pennsylvania to ensure a similar circumstance does not occur here.

We would also propose that all individuals receiving public benefits in the Commonwealth have their names crosschecked with those on the Federal Terrorist Watchlist and that benefits be denied to those whose names appear on such a list. If this is not already the case, we would look forward to working with the Department on legislation to that affect.

Thank you for your attention to this request. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

JOE SCARNATI  
State Senator  
25th District

DAVID G. ARGALL  
State Senator  
29th District



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## Tsarnaev case exposes faults in state welfare

Tuesday, April 30, 2013 – Anonymous (not verified)

Local Coverage

Wednesday, May 1, 2013

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The shocking news that the suspected marathon bombers were on the Bay State dole — even as the late Tamerlan Tsarnaev took a six-month jaunt to hang out with jihadis in Dagestan — has thrown a glaring national spotlight on the troubled Massachusetts welfare system.

"The proper question is: How can somebody afford an expensive, international flight when they're on public assistance?" said U.S. Rep. Jason Chaffetz (R-Utah), a member of the House Committee on Homeland Security. "Maybe they had some relative pay for them, but if that's the case, maybe some relative should be paying for their meal card."

State lawmakers, led by state Rep. David Linsky (D-Natick), are working their way through more than 500 pages of documents on the benefits that Boston Marathon bombing suspects Tamerlan and Dzhokhar Tsarnaev and their family received, while federal agents are investigating why Tamerlan Tsarnaev, who died April 19 in a firefight with police, traveled to Russia for six months in 2012 — while he was on welfare.

A source told the Herald the Tsarnaevs have taken in more than \$100,000. But the administration of Gov. Deval Patrick has refused to make details public.

U.S. Rep. Mike Rogers (R-Mich.), chairman of the House Intelligence committee, told the Herald he's "scratching his head" as to why the Tsarnaev family was on the dole and why the information isn't public.

"I think clearly he's come into the public view and that all should be scrutinized," Rogers said.

Massachusetts welfare programs were under fire long before the marathon bombings. Prior stunning embarrassments include:

- Herald reports that EBT cards were being used to buy cigarettes, booze and tattoos.
- A Herald report that the state could not locate thousands of welfare recipients.

- The inspector general's report that \$25 million a year had gone to EBT recipients who might not be eligible.
- The U.S. Department of Agriculture's report that Massachusetts overpaid food-stamp recipients by \$27 million.

Critics have said the erroneous taxpayer largesse is the result of poor oversight.

"The Department of Transitional Assistance uses the honor system rather than verifying Social Security numbers, residencies or whether you even have children," said state Rep. Shaunna O'Connell (R-Taunton). "It has become a national issue, and people are asking why someone who's out of the country for six months — someone who is on a terrorist watch list — would be getting benefits. When you're out of the state for two months, your benefits are supposed to be cut off."

The Department of Transitional Assistance has about 70 fraud investigators monitoring nearly 500,000 people on public assistance, state welfare officials said. The state has 1,112 welfare caseworkers, but they don't visit recipients' homes routinely to verify information.

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