

HOUSE No. 1922

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PRESENTED BY:

Willie Mae Allen

To the Honorable Senate and House of Representatives of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in General Court assembled:

The undersigned legislators and/or citizens respectfully petition for the passage of the accompanying bill:

An Act Establishing A Public Guardianship Commission.

PETITION OF:

NAME:	DISTRICT/ADDRESS:
Willie Mae Allen	6th Suffolk
Kay Khan	11th Middlesex
Stephen L. DiNatale	3rd Worcester
Martin J. Walsh	13th Suffolk

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

In the Year Two Thousand and Nine

AN ACT ESTABLISHING A PUBLIC GUARDIANSHIP COMMISSION.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Chapter 10 of the General Laws, as appearing in the 2000 Official Edition, is
2 hereby amended by inserting after section 35T the following new section: --

3 SECTION 35U. There shall be established and set up on the books of the commonwealth a
4 separate fund to be known as the Public Guardianship Commission Fund, to be used to meet the
5 operational costs of the public guardianship commission established under the provisions of
6 chapter 221D, in addition to any appropriation from the General Fund. Said fund shall consist of
7 amounts received from public and private sources as gifts, grants, donations, bequests and
8 devises of money any amounts to be received by said commission in fees for services pursuant to
9 sections 5 and 6 of chapter 221D. All revenues created under this section shall remain in said
10 Public Guardianship Commission Fund, subject to appropriation, to meet the operational costs of
11 said commission. All monies, as determined by the comptroller, remaining in the Public
12 Guardianship Commission Fund, in excess of appropriations from the fund for the fiscal year
13 then ending, shall on June thirtieth of each year be transferred by the treasurer to the General
14 Fund unless the general court otherwise provides.

15 SECTION 2. Subsection (a) of section 6 of chapter 201 of the General Laws, as appearing in the
16 2000 Official Edition, is hereby amended by striking out the first sentence and inserting in place
17 thereof the following sentence: -- A parent of a mentally ill person, two or more relatives or
18 friends of a mentally ill person, a nonprofit corporation organized under the laws of the
19 commonwealth whose corporate charter authorizes the corporation to act as a guardian of a

20 mentally ill person, the public guardianship commission or any agency with which it contracts
21 for guardianship or conservatorship services or any agency within the executive offices of health
22 and human services or educational affairs may file a petition in the probate court asking to have a
23 guardian appointed for such mentally ill person and if, after notice as provided in section seven
24 and a hearing, the court finds that he is incapable of taking care of himself by reason of mental
25 illness, it shall appoint a guardian of his person and estate.

26 SECTION 3. Subsection (a) of section 6A of said chapter 201, as appearing in the 2000 Official
27 Edition, is hereby amended by striking out the first sentence and inserting in place thereof the
28 following sentence: -- A parent of a mentally retarded person, two or more relatives or friends of
29 a mentally retarded person, a nonprofit corporation organized under the laws of the
30 commonwealth whose corporate charter authorizes the corporation to act as a guardian of a
31 mentally retarded person, the public guardianship commission or any agency with which it
32 contracts for guardianship or conservatorship services or any agency within the executive offices
33 of health and human services or educational affairs may file a petition in the probate court asking
34 to have a guardian appointed for such mentally retarded person.

35 SECTION 4. Section 7 of said chapter 201 of the General Laws, as appearing in the 2000
36 Official Edition, is hereby amended by striking out the first sentence and inserting in place
37 thereof the following sentence: -- Upon such petition the court shall cause not less than seven
38 days notice of the time and place appointed for the hearing to be given to the alleged mentally ill
39 or mentally retarded person, to the public guardianship commission if it or one of the agencies
40 with which it contracts for fiduciary services is nominated, to the department of mental health in
41 the case of a petition filed pursuant to section six, or the department of mental retardation in the
42 case of a petition filed pursuant to section six A, and, if the alleged mentally ill or mentally
43 retarded person is entitled to any benefit, estate or income paid or payable through the United
44 States veterans' bureau or its successor, to said bureau or its successor, except that the court may,
45 for cause shown, direct that a shorter notice be given.

46 SECTION 5. Subsection (a) of section 14 of said chapter 201 of the General Laws, as appearing
47 in the 2000 Official Edition, is hereby amended by striking out the first sentence and inserting in
48 place thereof the following sentence: -- Upon the petition of any agency within the executive

49 offices of health and human services or educational affairs, the public guardianship commission
50 or any agency with which it contracts for guardianship or conservatorship services or other
51 person in interest, the court may, if it finds that the welfare of a minor, a mentally ill or mentally
52 retarded person, or person unable to make or communicate informed decisions due to physical
53 incapacity or illness or spendthrift requires the immediate appointment of a temporary guardian
54 of his person and estate, appoint a temporary guardian of such minor, mentally ill or mentally
55 retarded person or spendthrift, with or without notice, and may in like manner remove or
56 discharge him or terminate the trust; or in the absence or a person to serve as temporary
57 guardian, the court by order or decree may authorize and monitor, as appropriate, medical
58 treatment; provided, however, that if the court makes the findings required in paragraph (c), it
59 shall authorize treatment with antipsychotic medication and shall, in the absence of a person to
60 serve as temporary guardian, appoint a suitable person to monitor the treatment process to ensure
61 that the treatment plan approved by the court is followed.

62 SECTION 6. Said chapter 201 of the General Laws is hereby amended by striking out section
63 16, as appearing in the 2000 Official Edition, and inserting in place thereof the following
64 section:-

65 Section 16. If a person by reason of mental weakness is unable to properly care for his property,
66 the probate court may, upon his petition or upon the petition of one or more of his friends, or of
67 the public guardianship commission or any agency with which it contracts for guardianship or
68 conservatorship services, or if a person by reason of physical incapacity is unable to properly
69 care for his property, the probate court may, upon his petition or with his written assent, and in
70 each case if after notice as provided in section seventeen and after hearing it appears that such
71 person is incapable of properly caring for his property, appoint a conservator to have charge and
72 management of his property, subject to the direction of the court.

73 SECTION 7. Section 16B of said chapter 201 as appearing in the 2000 Official Edition, is
74 hereby amended by striking out the first sentence and inserting in place thereof the following
75 sentence: -- A parent of a mentally retarded person, two or more of his relatives or friends, a
76 nonprofit corporation organized under the laws of the commonwealth whose corporate charter
77 authorizes the corporation to act as a conservator of a mentally retarded person, the public

78 guardianship commission or any agency with which it contracts for guardianship or
79 conservatorship services or any agency within the executive offices of health and human services
80 may file a petition in the probate court asking to have a conservator appointed for such mentally
81 retarded person.

82 SECTION 8. Section 21 of said chapter 201, as appearing in the 2000 Official Edition, is
83 hereby amended by striking out the first sentence and inserting in place thereof the following
84 sentence: -- Upon the petition of a person of mental weakness or of a friend or upon the petition
85 of the department of transitional assistance, of the public guardianship commission or any
86 agency with which it contracts for guardianship or conservatorship services or upon the petition
87 or with the written assent of a person who by reason of physical incapacity is unable to properly
88 care for his property, the probate court may, if it finds that the welfare of the person of mental
89 weakness or physical incapacity requires the immediate appointment of a temporary conservator
90 of his property, appoint such temporary conservator, with or without notice, and may in like
91 manner remove or discharge him or terminate his trust.

92 SECTION 9. The General Laws are hereby amended by inserting after chapter 221C, as
93 appearing in the 2000 Official Edition, the following chapter: --

94 CHAPTER 221D.

95 PUBLIC GUARDIANSHIP COMMISSION

96 SECTION 1. (a) There is established under the general superintendence of the supreme judicial
97 court a commission to be known as the public guardianship commission, composed of nine
98 members who shall be appointed by the members of the said court. One member shall be
99 nominated by the chief judge of the probate and family court department for the purpose of
100 representing that court on the commission; at least one member shall be a person with a
101 disability; at least one member shall be a person who is more than sixty years old; at least one
102 member shall be a representative of an organization whose primary purpose is to advocate for
103 persons with disabilities; at least one member shall be a representative of an organization whose
104 primary purpose is to advocate for elderly persons; and at least one member shall be
105 representative of elderly or other human service providers.

106 (b) Members of the commission shall serve for terms of five years, except that the
107 original terms of membership shall be one one-year term; two two-year terms; two three-year
108 terms; two four-year terms; and two five-year terms. No person shall be appointed to more than
109 two consecutive terms on the commission.

110 (c) No less than thirty days prior to making any appointment to the commission, the
111 justices of the supreme judicial court shall give public notice that a vacancy on the commission
112 exists and shall give interested persons an opportunity to advice regarding the appointments.

113 (d) Any vacancy occurring on the commission shall be filled within ninety days by the
114 justices. A person appointed to fill a vacancy occurring other than by expiration of a term of
115 office shall be appointed for the unexpired term of the member he succeeds, and shall be eligible
116 for appointment to one full five-year term.

117 (e) The commission shall elect from among its members a chairperson and any other
118 officers it deems necessary.

119 (f) Five members of the commission shall constitute a quorum and five affirmative
120 votes shall be required for any action or recommendation of the commission. The chairperson or
121 any five members of the commission may call a meeting. Advance notice of all meetings shall
122 be given to each member of the commission and to any other person who requests such notice.

123 (g) Members of the commission shall not be compensated for work performed for the
124 commission, but they shall be reimbursed for their actual and necessary expenses.

125 (h) Within three months after the appointment of the first executive director, and at
126 least every other year thereafter, the commission shall set priorities for service delivery. Prior to
127 adopting a principal service delivery mode, the commission shall publicly solicit and take into
128 consideration the views of clients, family members, advocates, providers of fiduciary services,
129 affected government officials and others concerned with the plight of persons in need of such
130 services. In order to establish a decentralized delivery system, the commission shall consider
131 promotion and support of delivery of fiduciary services by local, non-profit organizations and
132 encourage educational services and support to such families and friends of persons in need of

133 fiduciary services as are willing and, with assistance, able to provide such services on a
134 voluntary basis.

135 (i) The commission shall regularly report to the joint committee on human services
136 and elderly affairs and to the house and senate committees on ways and means of the general
137 court and to the justices of the supreme judicial court. The commission shall make its first report
138 one year from the date this section takes effect and thereafter annually on the last day of July
139 (except if such would be within six months of its first report), detailing (1) its priorities for
140 service delivery and the reasons therefore; (2) the actions it has taken during the preceding year,
141 including the number of persons served and the types of services provided to such persons; (3) a
142 description of all funds, including state appropriations and other assistance received by the
143 commission; (4) the names, duties and salaries of all individuals in its employ; (5) the money it
144 has disbursed and any savings to the commonwealth which its services have produced; (6) a
145 determination of the feasibility of utilizing volunteers to assist the commission in the delivery of
146 services; and (7) a detailed plan and cost estimate for any recommended expansion of the
147 service, including any savings to the commonwealth which such expansion might reasonably be
148 expected to produce.

149 SECTION 2. (a) The policies and standards contained in this section shall be adopted and
150 implemented by the commission through its rules and regulations, selection of and contracts with
151 individuals and agencies to act as fiduciary or provide fiduciary services, decisions regarding
152 persons being served or to be served by the commission, and other such ways as the commission
153 may determine.

154 (b) A guardianship, conservatorship or other fiduciary relationship shall be established
155 only when necessary to meet the needs of the incapacitated person and when such needs cannot
156 be satisfied using a less restrictive alternative.

157 (c) Each such fiduciary relationship shall be established and structured so that the
158 incapacitated person is allowed to make his or her own decisions to the maximum extent
159 possible.

160 (d) A guardian, conservator or other fiduciary shall exercise authority only as
161 necessitated by the incapacitated person's mental and adaptive limitations, and to, the extent
162 possible, shall encourage the incapacitated person to participate in decisions, to act on his or her
163 own behalf and to develop or regain the capacity to manage personal affairs. A guardian,
164 conservator or other fiduciary shall consider the expressed desires and personal values of the
165 incapacitated person when making decisions and shall otherwise act in the incapacitated person's
166 best interest and exercise reasonable care, diligence and prudence. It shall be assumed until
167 demonstrated otherwise that such incapacitated person would choose to live in the least
168 restrictive appropriate environment.

169 (e) With respect to each ward or proposed ward for whom the commission, or any
170 individual or agency with whom or with which it contracts for fiduciary services, is responsible,
171 the commission shall establish standards and procedures, and, subject to appropriation, bear the
172 expenses, to ensure that:

173 (1) the ward will understand, to the maximum extent feasible, the nature and
174 significance of any court proceedings;

175 (2) independent counsel is, to the extent necessary, made available to him or her
176 for all court proceedings, or, when he or she so requests, in order to petition for discharge or
177 removal of a guardian or other fiduciary;

178 (3) the commission shall immediately notify the court if the incapacitated
179 person's condition is changed so that he or she is capable of exercising rights previously limited;
180 and the commission shall cause an independent clinical review to be made at least annually to
181 determine whether any fiduciary relationship created is still necessary, and if it is not necessary,
182 that steps are taken to discharge the fiduciary;

183 (4) an annual accounting is made as required by procedures of the probate and
184 family court department; and

185 (5) there is adequate monitoring and review of the quality of fiduciary services
186 and of compliance with the policies, standards and procedures of the commission.

187 SECTION 3. (a) The commission shall, subject to appropriation, employ an executive director
188 who shall be authorized to appoint such other staff, subject to appropriation, necessary to carry
189 out the commission's duties pursuant to this chapter and chapter two hundred and one. The staff
190 shall serve at the pleasure of the commission and shall not be subject to the provisions of chapter
191 thirty-one or section nine A of chapter thirty. The executive director shall be responsible for the
192 administrative operation of the commission and shall perform such other tasks as the commission
193 may determine. The commission may employ, subject to appropriation, the services of experts
194 and consultants necessary to carry out its duties and may also accept the services of volunteers,
195 who may be reimbursed for their actual and necessary expenses incurred in carrying out their
196 duties.

197 (b) The commission, pursuant to the provisions of section two of chapter thirty A, shall
198 adopt such rules and regulations as are necessary to carry out the purposes of this chapter.

199 (c) The commission shall be subject to all laws and regulations governing the procure-
200 ment by state agencies and commissions of supplies, services or construction.

201 SECTION 4. (a) Any resident of the commonwealth who is indigent (as defined in section
202 twenty-seven A of chapter two hundred and sixty-one) and who is an incapacitated person for
203 whom no other qualified person or organization is available and willing to accept appointment as
204 guardian, conservator or other fiduciary, shall be eligible for the services of the commission.

205 (b) A court or other appointing authority shall not appoint as guardian, conservator or
206 other fiduciary either the commission or any agency or individual contracting with the
207 commission unless the court or other appointing authority first determines that no other qualified
208 person or organization is available and willing to accept the appointment. In addition, in any
209 case involving a minor, the court or other appointing authority shall not appoint as guardian,
210 conservator or other fiduciary either the commission or any agency or individual contracting
211 with the commission unless the court or other appointing authority first determines that
212 responsibility for the minor cannot be accepted by the department of social services pursuant to
213 chapter one hundred and nineteen. No court or other appointing authority shall appoint either the
214 commission or any agency or individual contracting with the commission as guardian,

215 conservator or other fiduciary of any eligible person unless the commission or the agency or
216 individual contracting with the commission first determines, in accordance with this chapter and
217 rules and regulations of the commission, and communicates with the court, that it, he or she has
218 the capacity to provide high-quality fiduciary services and can otherwise carry out the
219 responsibilities under such appointment; and any appointment in violation of this provision shall
220 be void.

221 SECTION 5. (a) The commission may, subject to appropriation, contract with non-profit
222 private agencies and individuals to serve as the guardian, conservator or other fiduciary or to
223 provide guardianship, conservatorship or other fiduciary services to any individual for whom the
224 commission has been or might be appointed such fiduciary; provided, however, that no such
225 contract shall be entered into with a non-profit private agency unless the articles of incorporation
226 of the agency authorize it to serve in such fiduciary capacity. Any such non-profit private
227 agency or individual with which or with whom the commission so contracts shall in this section
228 and in sections 6 and 7, be referred to as a "fiduciary agency."

229 (b) The commission or any fiduciary agency may serve as a plenary, limited or
230 temporary guardian, guardian ad litem, conservator or monitor after appointment by a court
231 pursuant to the law of the commonwealth, including but not limited to chapters nineteen A, one
232 hundred and nineteen, one hundred and twenty-three, one hundred and twenty-three B and two
233 hundred and one.

234 (c) The commission or any fiduciary agency may petition the court for appointment as
235 guardian, guardian ad litem, or conservator. Any other petitioner for guardianship or
236 conservatorship after preliminary investigation by, and approval of, the commission or fiduciary
237 agency, as the case may be, may nominate the commission or such fiduciary agency as a
238 guardian, guardian-ad-litem or conservator, with notice to the commission or fiduciary agency in
239 accordance with chapter two hundred and one.

240 (d) The commission or any fiduciary agency may serve as trustee or other fiduciary,
241 except an administrator or executor of an estate. Before serving as a trustee or fiduciary, the

242 commission or fiduciary agency must receive court approval, except as provided in subsection
243 (e).

244 (e) The commission or any fiduciary agency may serve as representative payee by ap-
245 pointment of the appropriate federal agency without court review or approval. A representative
246 payee shall be considered a fiduciary for purposes of this chapter.

247 (f) The commission or any fiduciary agency, on its own motion or at the request of the
248 court, may petition to intervene at any time in a guardianship or conservatorship proceeding to
249 protect the best interests of the proposed ward.

250 (g) The commission or any fiduciary agency may provide information and assistance
251 pertaining to guardianship, conservatorship and other fiduciary services, and may perform such
252 other tasks as may be necessary to carry out its responsibilities under this chapter.

253 (h) The commission or any fiduciary agency shall maintain records of each case in
254 which the commission or fiduciary agency provides guardianship, conservatorship or other
255 fiduciary services. Each such case record shall include the financial and personal information
256 necessary for the commission or fiduciary agency to carry out its fiduciary responsibilities. Such
257 records shall be the property of the commission. Access to such records shall be limited to
258 members and staff of the commission, to staff of the agency serving as the fiduciary of the
259 subject of a particular record and to others pursuant to an order of a court of competent
260 jurisdiction; provided, however, that authorized agents of the commonwealth, for auditing
261 purposes, shall be afforded access to such records, with information which may be used to
262 identify the subject redacted.

263 (i) The commission shall be eligible for and shall have the authority to accept any and
264 all donations, grants, appropriations, bequests and devises of money, property, personnel services
265 or other assistance which may be received from the commonwealth or any agency thereof, the
266 United States or any agency thereof, and other governmental agency, any institution, person,
267 firm or corporation, public or private; to be held, used or applied for any or all purposes specified
268 in this chapter. No such assistance shall in any way compromise or limit the independence and
269 autonomy of the commission or its authority to carry out the purposes of this chapter. Any funds

270 received by the commission other than by appropriation shall be deposited into the Public
271 Guardianship Commission Fund, as provided for in section 35U of chapter 10.

272 SECTION 6. (a) If the commission or any fiduciary agency is appointed a guardian, conservator
273 or other fiduciary, it shall not charge for the costs of its services or the costs of the appointment
274 or approval procedure against the property or income of the individual for whom it serves as
275 fiduciary, unless the court or other appointing authority determines at any time after the
276 commission's or fiduciary agency's appointment that the individual is financially able to pay all
277 or part of the costs.

278 (b) The court or other appointing authority shall determine ability to pay by investigat-
279 ing the nature, extent and liquidity of assets and the disposable net income of the individual.

280 (c) The commission, through its executive director, may recommend fees to be assess-
281 ed for its services in any individual case in which the ward is no longer indigent, in accordance
282 with standards established in its rules and regulations. No fees may be assessed for fiduciary
283 services unless the eligible person or ward is given written notice at the start of such services that
284 such fees may be assessed.

285 (d) The commission shall deposit any payment of assessed fees into the Public
286 Guardianship Commission Fund, as provided for in section 35U of chapter 10.

287 (e) The commission may claim the reasonable value of services rendered to any
288 individual against his estate upon the death of that individual, if the individual was no longer
289 indigent at the time of death.

290 SECTION 7. Notwithstanding any other law to the contrary, neither the commission nor any
291 fiduciary agency shall be required to file a bond in individual cases in which the commission or a
292 fiduciary agency is appointed to act in a fiduciary capacity but shall give a bond, with sufficient
293 sureties, for the joint benefit of all persons for whom the commission or fiduciary agency is
294 appointed to act in an amount not less than the value of all assets held by the commission and
295 such contracted fiduciary agencies as of the last day of the most recent fiscal year, but at no time
296 less than fifty thousand dollars. Such bond shall be filed with the chief judge of the probate and

297 family court department, and a copy thereof shall be filed with the register of probate of each
298 division of said court in which the commission or a fiduciary agency has been appointed to serve
299 in a fiduciary capacity. The state treasurer may, subject to appropriation, set aside sufficient
300 funds for the purpose of providing a surety for the commission's bond pursuant to this section.

301 SECTION 8. The books and records of the commission shall be audited by the state auditor
302 within eighteen months after this chapter becomes effective as to Suffolk county, and every two
303 years thereafter. A copy of such audit shall be sent to the clerk of the house of representatives
304 who shall forward the same to the house and senate committees on ways and means and the joint
305 committee on human services and elderly affairs.

306 SECTION 10. Section 1 of this Act and sections 1, 2 and 3 of chapter 221D of the General
307 Laws, as inserted by section 9 of this Act, shall take effect on July 1, 2007.

308 All other sections of this Act, including the other sections of said chapter 221D, shall take affect
309 on October 1, 2007, provided, however, that, at said effective date, the provisions of subsection
310 (a) of section 4 of said chapter 221D shall apply only to Suffolk county.

311 Said provisions of subsection (a) of section 4 of chapter 221D shall apply to the counties of
312 Plymouth, Worcester, Norfolk and Barnstable on January 1, 2009 and to all remaining counties
313 on July 1, 2009.