

HOUSE No. 197

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PRESENTED BY:

David Henry Argosky LeBoeuf

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 adoption of the accompanying bill:

An Act creating a special commission to study the current refugee resettlement infrastructure and ensure the successful integration of refugees in Massachusetts.

PETITION OF:

NAME:	DISTRICT/ADDRESS:	DATE ADDED:
<i>David Henry Argosky LeBoeuf</i>	<i>17th Worcester</i>	<i>1/17/2023</i>
<i>Vanna Howard</i>	<i>17th Middlesex</i>	<i>1/31/2023</i>

HOUSE No. 197

By Representative LeBoeuf of Worcester, a petition (accompanied by bill, House, No. 197) of David Henry Argosky LeBoeuf and Vanna Howard for legislation to establish a special commission to study the current refugee resettlement infrastructure and ensure the successful integration of refugees in Massachusetts. Children, Families and Persons with Disabilities.

[SIMILAR MATTER FILED IN PREVIOUS SESSION
SEE HOUSE, NO. 242 OF 2021-2022.]

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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**In the One Hundred and Ninety-Third General Court
(2023-2024)**
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An Act creating a special commission to study the current refugee resettlement infrastructure and ensure the successful integration of refugees in Massachusetts.

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. Notwithstanding any general or special law to the contrary, there is hereby
2 established a special commission to study and make recommendations concerning the
3 infrastructure of refugee resettlement agencies in the Commonwealth, their breadth of services,
4 where services are lacking, and how the Commonwealth can best work in conjunction with the
5 federal government to rebuild and support an infrastructure of refugee resettlement agencies that
6 promotes sustainable long-term integration.

7 SECTION 2. The commission shall consist of no less than 18 members: the Executive
8 Director of the Office for Refugees and Immigrants or their designee, the Secretary of the
9 Executive Office of Health and Human Services or their designee, the Commissioner of the

10 Department of Transitional Assistance or their designee, the Undersecretary of the Department
11 of Housing and Community Development or their designee, the Commissioner of the
12 Department of Children and Families or their designee; 1 representative of the International
13 Institute of New England; 1 representative of Ascentria Care Alliance; 1 representative of Jewish
14 Family Service Metrowest; 2 additional representatives of refugee resettlement agencies within
15 the Commonwealth; 1 individual of the Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy
16 Coalition, 3 individuals with lived experience as refugees; 1 representative of an employer or
17 labor union that directly employs refugees; 1 representative of a job training program that works
18 directly with refugees; and 2 individuals with expertise in one or more of the following areas:
19 public and affordable housing, federal immigration law and regulation, emergency management,
20 the needs of forcibly displaced individuals.

21 SECTION 3. The commission shall, at a minimum, investigate, collect data and make
22 recommendations on the following topics:

23 The state of the existing reception and placement (R&P) structure in Massachusetts,
24 including but not limited to:

25 Current efforts to resettle refugees, including efforts to assist refugees in obtaining
26 adequate housing, healthcare, education, transfer of professional licensure and workforce
27 development training;

28 Any failures or gaps in resources that exist in the current system of services for refugees
29 and recently resettled individuals, and where funds should be allocated to strengthen current
30 systems or address gaps in services;

31 Any failures or gaps that exist due to the systematic dismantling of the federal refugee
32 program over the previous 5 years; and how the Commonwealth can support the rebuilding of a
33 strong refugee resettlement structure.

34 The state of the current integration system in place for refugees in the Commonwealth,
35 including but not limited to:

36 A study of the current integration pipeline, and the systems in place to assist refugees
37 from time of arrival through end of services;

38 Identification of gaps that exist in the current system, including a study of any potential
39 “cliff effect” that exists in the structure as it stands currently;

40 Public policy and funding structures that the Commonwealth should support to ensure the
41 successful long-term integration of refugees into our society and workforce.

42 SECTION 4. The commission may create committees and working groups to inform the
43 commission’s investigation of the topics referenced in SECTION 3. The commission, its
44 committees and its working groups may procure services, including consulting services, and
45 otherwise involve experts, stakeholders, and members of the public. The commission shall be
46 supported by staff from the Massachusetts Office for Refugees and Immigrants.

47 SECTION 5. Members of the commission shall be named and the commission shall
48 commence its work within 60 days of the effective date of this act. The commission shall report
49 to the general court and governor the results of its study, together with any draft legislation,
50 regulations or administrative procedure necessary to better serve refugees resettling in the
51 Commonwealth by filing the same with the clerks of the senate and the house of representatives

52 and the director of the office of refugees and immigrants not more than 1 year after the effective
53 date of this act.