

HOUSE No. 3778

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PRESENTED BY:

Joan Meschino

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 establishing a special commission to end family, child, and individual homelessness.

PETITION OF:

NAME:	DISTRICT/ADDRESS:	DATE ADDED:
<i>Joan Meschino</i>	<i>3rd Plymouth</i>	<i>2/18/2021</i>

HOUSE No. 3778

By Ms. Meschino of Hull, a petition (accompanied by bill, House, No. 3778) of Joan Meschino for an investigation by a special commission (including members of the General Court) relative to ending family, child, and individual homelessness. Children, Families and Persons with Disabilities.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

**In the One Hundred and Ninety-Second General Court
(2021-2022)**

An Act establishing a special commission to end family, child, and individual homelessness.

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. The General Court hereby finds and declares that:

2 (1) there is a crisis of family, child and individual homelessness in Massachusetts;

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4 (2) there is a great need to understand the scope, magnitude, costs and impact of family
5 and individual homelessness, particularly the educational and health impacts on homeless
6 children;

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8 (3) there are many root causes of family and individual homelessness, including, but not
9 limited to, poverty, domestic violence, community violence, substance use disorders and mental
10 health issues;

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12 (4) although the commonwealth currently provides for emergency housing assistance
13 programs for families and provides many resources available to homeless families while in
14 shelter, these resources are neither designed, nor enough to end this statewide crisis;

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16 (5) although the commonwealth oversees the funds for individual shelters through the
17 department of housing and community development and provides many of the resources
18 available to individuals while in shelter, these resources are neither designed, nor enough to end
19 this statewide crisis;

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21 (6) it is paramount that the commonwealth ascertains the costs incurred by insufficient
22 and uncoordinated resources available for homeless families and individuals; and

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24 (7) family and individual homelessness is solvable and preventable with a concrete,
25 actionable plan that coordinates all necessary resources to end family homelessness in the
26 commonwealth.

27 SECTION 2. (a) There shall be established a special commission on family, child and
28 individual homelessness pursuant to section 2A of chapter 4 of the General Laws to develop an
29 actionable and measurable plan to end family, child and individual homelessness in the
30 commonwealth. The commission shall: (1) identify the current gaps in resources and the
31 necessary steps to fill those gaps; (2) discern the impact of the lack of stable housing for

32 homeless and housing insecure children; (3) conduct a cost analysis of family, children and
33 individual homelessness currently and a cost analysis of providing the necessary resources to end
34 homelessness; and (4) generate a thorough plan that would unite local, state and federal
35 resources into a coordinated effort that will lead to the end of homelessness. The commission
36 shall utilize an equity framework prioritizing protected characteristics, including, but not limited
37 to, gender, race, and disability, and a trauma informed care approach in satisfying these
38 objectives.

39 (b) The commission shall consist of the following 31 members: the governor or a
40 designee from the governor's staff, who shall serve as chair; the chief justice of the housing court
41 or their designee; the chief justice of the juvenile court or their designee; the secretary of the
42 executive office of health and human services or their designee; the undersecretary of the
43 department of housing and community development or their designee; the commissioner of the
44 department of elementary and secondary education or their designee; the commissioner of the
45 department of mental health or their designee; the commissioner of the department of
46 developmental services or their designee; the commissioner of the department of transitional
47 assistance or their designee; the commissioner of the department of children and families or their
48 designee; the commissioner of the department of early education and care or their designee; the
49 secretary of elder affairs or their designee; the commissioner of the Massachusetts rehabilitation
50 commission or their designee; the commissioner of the department of public health or their
51 designee; 3 members appointed by the Massachusetts Municipal Association, one representing
52 an urban, one representing a suburban, and one representing a rural municipality; 2 members of
53 the house of representatives to be appointed by the speaker of the house; 2 members of the senate
54 to be appointed by the senate president; and 10 members to be appointed by the governor, 2 of

55 whom shall be individuals that have prior lived experience with family homelessness or housing
56 insecurity, 2 of whom shall be individuals that have prior lived experience with individual
57 homelessness or housing insecurity, 1 of whom shall be the chief executive officer of an
58 organization that advocates for family homelessness, 1 of whom shall be the chief executive
59 officer of an organization that advocates for individual homelessness, 1 of whom shall be the
60 chief executive officer of an organization that advocates for child homelessness, 1 of whom shall
61 be the director or an organization that provides shelter for families experiencing homelessness, 1
62 of whom shall be the director or an organization that provides shelter for individuals
63 experiencing homelessness and 1 of whom shall be the director or an organization that provides
64 shelter for children experiencing homelessness.

65 (c) The commission shall consult, as necessary, with officials from the Massachusetts
66 rehabilitation commission, the department of corrections, the department of probation and the
67 department of youth services.

68 (d) The commission may elect to form subcommittees on various specific issues within
69 the scope of the commission. Any subcommittees formed by the commission shall meet not less
70 than monthly.

71 (e) (i) The commission shall meet not less than monthly for the first year following the
72 passage of this act.

73 (ii) The commission may hold additional meetings to address specific issues as they
74 relate to the work of the commission.

75 (iii) The committee shall file bi-annual progress reports with the governor and the clerks
76 of the house of representatives and the senate.

77 (iv) The commission shall, not later than 1 year after the passage of this act, file its first
78 report, together with any recommendations and drafts of recommended legislation, with the
79 governor and clerks of the house of representatives and the senate.

80 (v) Not later than 5 years after the passage of this act, the commission shall file a
81 comprehensive, actionable plan to end homelessness in the commonwealth with the governor
82 and clerks of the house of representatives and the senate. The plan shall incorporate, as
83 appropriate, components various housing and support models such as housing first, permanent
84 supportive housing, wrap around services and the convention of the rights of the child.