

# **HOUSE . . . . . No. 3969**

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## The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, January 25, 2016.

The committee on Ways and Means, to whom was referred the Bill to eliminate racial and ethnic health disparities in the commonwealth (House, No. 2048), reports recommending that the same ought to pass with an amendment substituting therefor the accompanying bill (House, No. 3969).

For the committee,

BRIAN S. DEMPSEY.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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**In the One Hundred and Eighty-Ninth General Court  
(2015-2016)**  
\_\_\_\_\_

An Act to eliminate racial and ethnic health disparities in the commonwealth.

*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 second paragraph of section 16 of chapter 6A of the General Laws, is  
2 hereby amended by striking out, in lines 38 and 39, as appearing in the 2014 Official Edition, the  
3 words “and, (7) the health facilities appeals board” and inserting in place thereof the following  
4 words:- (7) the health facilities appeals board; and (8) the office of health equity.

5           SECTION 2. Section 16O of said chapter 6A, as so appearing, is hereby amended by  
6 inserting after the word, “recommendations” in line 3 and 4, the following words:- to the director  
7 of the office of health equity.

8           SECTION 3. Said section 16O of said chapter 6A, as so appearing, is hereby further  
9 amended by inserting after the words “ex officio”, in line 27, the following words:- ; the director  
10 of the office of health equity, or the director’s designee;

11           SECTION 4. Said chapter 6A is hereby further amended by inserting after section 16V  
12 the following section:—

13 Section 16W. (a) As used in this section the following words shall, unless the context  
14 clearly requires otherwise, have the following meanings:–

15 “Disparities”, differences in the incidence, prevalence, mortality and burden of diseases  
16 and other adverse health conditions that exist among specific racial and ethnic groups.

17 “Office”, the office of health equity.

18 (b) There shall be an office of health equity within the executive office of health and  
19 human services. The office shall be under the supervision and control of a director who shall be  
20 appointed by the secretary of health and human services. The health disparities council,  
21 established in section 16O, shall serve as an advisory board to the office.

22 (c) The office shall coordinate all activities of the commonwealth to eliminate racial and  
23 ethnic health and health care disparities. The office shall set goals for the reduction of disparities  
24 and prepare an annual plan for the commonwealth to eliminate disparities.

25 (d) The office shall collaborate with other state agencies of the commonwealth on  
26 disparities reduction initiatives to address the social factors that influence health inequality. The  
27 state agencies shall include, but shall not be limited to, the executive office of health and human  
28 services, the executive office of housing and economic development, the executive office of  
29 public safety and security, the executive office of energy and environmental affairs, the  
30 Massachusetts Department of Transportation, the executive office of labor and workforce  
31 development and the executive office of education. The office shall facilitate communication and  
32 partnership between these agencies to develop greater understanding of the intersections between  
33 agency activities and health outcomes. The office shall facilitate development of interagency  
34 initiatives to address the social and economic determinants of health disparity issues including,

35 but not limited to, healthcare access and quality; housing availability and quality; transportation  
36 availability, location and cost; community policing and safe spaces; air, water, land usage and  
37 quality; employment and workforce development; and education access and quality.

38 (e) The office shall evaluate the effectiveness of programs and interventions to eliminate  
39 health disparities, identifying best practices and model programs for the state.

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41 (f) The office shall prepare an annual health disparities report. The report shall evaluate  
42 the progress of the commonwealth toward eliminating racial and ethnic health disparities, using,  
43 where possible, quantifiable measures and comparative benchmarks and, where possible, shall  
44 detail such progress on a regional basis. The office shall hold public hearings in several regions  
45 of the commonwealth to gather public information on the topics of the report. The report shall be  
46 filed with the governor and the clerks of the house of representatives and senate and the members  
47 of the health disparities council, established under section 16O before July 1 of each year and  
48 shall be posted on the official website of the commonwealth.

49 SECTION 5. Section 5 of chapter 6D, as appearing in the 2014 Official Edition, is hereby  
50 amended by adding the following sentence:- The commission shall establish goals that are  
51 intended to reduce health care disparities in racial, ethnic and disabled communities and in doing  
52 so shall seek to incorporate the recommendations of the health disparities council and the office  
53 of health equity.