

HOUSE No. 4016

Section 128 contained in the engrossed Bill making appropriations for the fiscal year 2022 for the maintenance of the departments, boards, commissions, institutions and certain activities of the Commonwealth, for interest, sinking fund and serial bond requirements and for certain permanent improvements (see House, No. 4002), which had been returned by His Excellency the Governor with recommendation of amendment (for message see Attachment P of House, No. 4019). July 22, 2021.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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

An Act establishing a special legislative commission to study poverty in the Commonwealth.

Whereas, The deferred operation of this act would tend to defeat its purpose, which is to forthwith establish a special legislative commission to study poverty in the commonwealth, therefore it is hereby declared to be an emergency law, necessary for the immediate preservation of the public convenience.

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

- 1 (a) There shall be a special commission established pursuant to section 2A of chapter 4 of
- 2 the General Laws to study poverty in the commonwealth. The commission shall investigate,
- 3 develop and recommend methods and strategies for reducing poverty and expanding opportunity
- 4 for people with low incomes. The commission shall consist of: 1 member of the senate appointed
- 5 by the senate president, who shall serve as co-chair; 1 member of the house of representatives
- 6 appointed by the speaker of the house of representatives, who shall serve as co-chair; the chairs
- 7 of the joint committee on children, families and persons with disabilities; the secretary of
- 8 administration and finance or a designee; the secretary of health and human services or a

9 designee; the secretary of elder affairs or a designee; the commissioner of public health or a
10 designee; the undersecretary for housing and community development or a designee; the
11 commissioner of transitional assistance or a designee; the secretary of labor and workforce
12 development or a designee; the secretary of education or a designee; the secretary of
13 transportation or a designee; the commissioner of early education and care or a designee; 2
14 members appointed by the co-chairs who shall have expertise in economics and socio-economic
15 policy; 1 member appointed by the Massachusetts Association for Community Action, Inc.; 1
16 member appointed by Massachusetts Municipal Association, Inc.; 1 member appointed by
17 Massachusetts Association of Community Development Corporations; 1 member appointed by
18 Massachusetts Law Reform Institute, Inc.; 1 member appointed by Massachusetts Association
19 for Early Education & Care, Inc.; 1 member appointed by Citizens' Housing and Planning
20 Association, Inc.; 1 member appointed by Massachusetts Coalition for the Homeless, Inc.; 1
21 member appointed by Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition, Inc.; 1
22 member appointed by the United Way of Massachusetts Bay, Inc.; 1 member appointed by the
23 Alliance for Business Leadership, Inc.; 1 member appointed by the Massachusetts Business
24 Roundtable, Inc.; 1 member appointed by the Gerontology Institute at the University of
25 Massachusetts Boston; 1 member appointed by Project Bread – The Walk for Hunger, Inc.; and 2
26 members who are not currently serving in public office to be appointed by the governor, 1 of
27 whom shall be from a community foundation and 1 of whom shall be from a community-based
28 organization. All appointments shall be made not later than 30 days after the effective date of
29 this section. Members of the commission shall serve without compensation.

30 (b) The commission shall study ways to promote opportunity, address inequality and
31 reduce poverty in the commonwealth. The commission shall make recommendations that, if

32 implemented, would significantly reduce poverty in the commonwealth over the next 10 years.
33 The study shall include, but not be limited to: (i) a historical analysis of poverty rates in the
34 commonwealth; (ii) an analysis of demographic disparities in poverty rates including, but not
35 limited to, any racial or ethnic disparities; (iii) an assessment of the underlying causes of poverty,
36 including any specific issues that contribute to the disparities identified in clause (ii); (iv) an
37 analysis of regional disparities in poverty rates in the commonwealth; and (v) a survey of
38 existing public programs and services that most effectively reduce poverty both in the
39 commonwealth and in other states. The commission's recommendations may include proposed
40 legislative and regulatory changes. Any such recommendations shall include, if feasible, the
41 estimated costs to the commonwealth of implementing the recommendations; provided, however,
42 that such estimated costs shall take into account any reductions in the utilization and costs of
43 other programs and services provided or supported by the commonwealth.

44 (c) The commission shall meet not less than quarterly. The commission may consult and
45 collaborate with relevant experts, community-based organizations, research institutes and state
46 agencies. The commission shall conduct not fewer than 2 public hearings in geographically
47 diverse areas of the commonwealth.

48 (d) Not later than December 31, 2022, the commission shall file a report of its findings,
49 including any legislative or regulatory recommendations, with the clerks of the senate and the
50 house of representatives, the joint committee on children, families and persons with disabilities,
51 the joint committee on housing, the joint committee on education, the joint committee on
52 community development and small businesses, the joint committee on economic development
53 and emerging technologies, the joint committee on public health, the joint committee on racial

54 equity, civil rights, and inclusion and the senate and house committees on ways and means. The
55 commission may make interim reports as appropriate.