

HOUSE No. 4172



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
STATE HOUSE · BOSTON, MA 02133
(617) 725-4000

MAURA T. HEALEY
GOVERNOR

KIMBERLEY DRISCOLL
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

November 9, 2023

To the Honorable Senate and House of Representatives,

I am pleased to submit for your consideration An Act Honoring, Empowering, and Recognizing our Servicemembers and Veterans.

On March 1, 2023, our administration established the Executive Office of Veterans Services (EOVS), reaffirming our commitments to veterans who have sacrificed and served their nation, and to provide an increased level of oversight, accountability, and professionalism. This important step was made possible because of the leadership of the Legislature, and we are grateful for their partnership in our efforts to improve veteran services across the state.

The Healey-Driscoll administration has completed a robust engagement process to better understand the legislative and programmatic priorities of the veteran community. I am proud to say that the administration has engaged with over 75 Veterans Service Officers representing over 100 municipalities, heard from over 30 nonprofit partners, and conducted a 50-state review of veteran policy and legislative efforts. The legislation I am filing today consists of proposals aimed at expanding veterans’ benefits, increasing inclusivity, and modernizing services.

The legislation will increase benefits and opportunities for veterans, including by:

1. Increasing the annuity paid to disabled veterans, surviving spouses, or Gold Star parents from \$2,000 to \$2,500.
2. Allowing veterans who lack other options to be reimbursed for behavioral health services.
3. Increasing the tax credit for employers who hire eligible veterans from \$2,000 to \$2,500.

4. Giving municipalities options to increase property tax exemptions for veterans, by doubling the existing exemption for veterans alone and/or tying the exemption to inflation.
5. Lengthening the timeframe in which veterans in public service can pay to have up to four years of active-duty service time count toward their state retirement.

This legislation will redouble our commitment to inclusivity and greater representation of all our veterans, including by:

1. Broadening the definition of veteran by aligning the state Chapter 115 program definition of a veteran with the United States Department of Veteran Affairs (VA) definition, allowing EOVS to serve more veterans.
2. Expanding the scope of the Veterans Equality Review Board to allow individuals discharged on the basis of additional protected classes (including race/ethnicity, color, religious creed, national origin, age, and disability) to become eligible for state veterans benefits.
3. Providing, through a two-year pilot program, in vitro fertilization (IVF) reimbursement to disabled same-sex women veterans who have been denied IVF reimbursement by the VA solely because they are in a same-sex marriage.

And this legislation will modernize our approach to serving veterans, including by:

1. Revising Chapter 115 and 115A to ensure gender neutral and inclusive language while removing antiquated references.
2. Creating a public-private working group to study the health benefits of psychedelics as treatment for veterans suffering physical or mental disorders related to their service.

Our veterans answered the call to serve our state and country, and they deserve the utmost dignity, respect, and support for their service. This bill reaffirms the Commonwealth's commitment to supporting all of our servicemembers and their families.

I urge your favorable consideration of this legislation.

Respectfully submitted,

Maura T. Healey,
Governor

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

**In the One Hundred and Ninety-Third General Court
(2023-2024)**

An Act honoring, empowering, and recognizing our servicemembers and veterans.

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. Section 34 of chapter 2 of the General Laws, as appearing in the 2022
2 Official Edition, is hereby amended by striking out, in line 2, the word “department” and
3 inserting in place thereof the following words:- executive office.

4 SECTION 2. Subsection (d) of section 16DD of chapter 6A of the General Laws, as so
5 appearing, is hereby amended by striking out, in line 29, the word “department” and inserting in
6 place thereof the following words:- executive office.

7 SECTION 3. Section 105 of said chapter 6A, as so appearing, is hereby amended by
8 striking out, in line 1, the word “department” and inserting in place thereof the following words:-
9 executive office.

10 SECTION 4. Section 4G of chapter 7 of the General Laws, as so appearing, is hereby
11 amended by striking out, in lines 7 to 8, the words “the department of veterans’ services”.

12 SECTION 5. Subsection (k) of section 61 of said chapter 7, as so appearing, is hereby
13 amended by striking out, in lines 124 to 125, the word “department” and inserting in place
14 thereof the following words:- executive office.

15 SECTION 6. Paragraph 2 of section 17 of chapter 11 of the General Laws, as so
16 appearing, is hereby amended by striking out, in line 21, the word “department” and inserting in
17 place thereof the following words:- executive office.

18 SECTION 7. Section 49 of chapter 31 of the General Laws, as so appearing, is hereby
19 amended by striking out, in lines 14 to 15, the words “in the City of Chelsea”.

20 SECTION 8. Subsection (h) of said section 4 of said chapter 32, as so appearing, is
21 hereby amended by inserting after the words “United States shall be”, in lines 148 to 149, the
22 following words:- provided written notice by the retirement board upon entry into service that
23 they are.

24 SECTION 9. Said subsection (h) of said section 4 of said chapter 32, as so appearing, is
25 hereby further amended by inserting after the word “member”, in line 151, the following words:-
26 prior to or within 1 year of vesting pursuant to this chapter.

27 SECTION 10. Section 5 of chapter 59 of the General Laws, as so appearing, is hereby
28 amended by inserting after clause Twenty-second H the following 2 clauses:-

29 Twenty-second I. In a city or town that accepts this section and is certified by the
30 commissioner to be assessing all property at full and fair cash valuation, an abatement granted
31 pursuant clause Twenty-second, Twenty-second A, Twenty-second B, Twenty-second C,
32 Twenty-second E or Twenty-second F shall be increased annually by an amount equal to the

33 increase in the cost of living as determined by the Consumer Price Index for such year. The
34 department of revenue shall annually inform each city or town that accepts this clause of the
35 amount of this increase.

36 Twenty-second J. In a city or town that accepts this section and is certified by the
37 commissioner to be assessing all property at full and fair cash valuation, a taxpayer who
38 otherwise qualifies for an exemption pursuant clause Twenty-second, Twenty-second A,
39 Twenty-second B, Twenty-second C, Twenty-second E or Twenty-second F shall be granted an
40 additional exemption that shall be uniform for all herein named exemptions and the amount of
41 which shall not exceed 100 per cent of the exemption for which the taxpayer qualifies, as may be
42 determined by the legislative body of the city or town, subject to its charter, not later than the
43 beginning of the fiscal year to which the additional exemption shall commence. Once accepted,
44 the amount of the exemption shall continue until amended by the legislative body of the city or
45 town. Notwithstanding any provision of this chapter to the contrary, the exemption shall be in
46 addition to any exemption allowable pursuant to said section 5; provided, however, that in no
47 instance shall the taxable valuation of the property, after all applicable exemptions, be reduced
48 below 10 per cent of its full and fair cash valuation, except through the applicability of clause
49 Eighteenth of said section 5. Acceptance of this section by a city or town shall not increase the
50 amount that it otherwise would have been reimbursed by the commonwealth pursuant to the
51 respective clause. The additional exemption contained within this section shall not be
52 implemented in any year in which the city or town has also accepted the section 5C1/2 of chapter
53 59.

54 SECTION 11. Paragraph (1) of subsection (u) of section 6 of chapter 62 of the General
55 Laws, as so appearing, is hereby amended by striking out, in line 1113, the figure “2,000” and
56 inserting in place thereof the following figure:- 2,500.

57 SECTION 12. Paragraph (4) of said subsection (u) of said section 6 of said chapter 62,
58 as so appearing, is hereby amended by striking out, in line 1130, the figure “2,000” and inserting
59 in place thereof the following figure:- 2,500.

60 SECTION 13. Subsection (a) of section 38GG of chapter 63 of the General Laws, as so
61 appearing, is hereby amended by striking out, in line 8, the figure “2,000” and inserting in place
62 thereof the following figure:- 2,500.

63 SECTION 14. Subsection (d) of said section 38GG of said chapter 63, as so appearing, is
64 hereby amended by striking out, in line 24, the figure “2,000” and inserting in place thereof the
65 following figure:- 2,500.

66 SECTION 15. Section 6 of chapter 64H of the General Laws, as so appearing, is hereby
67 amended by striking out subsection (u) and inserting in place thereof the following subsection:-

68 (u) Sale of a motor vehicle purchased by and for the use of a person who has suffered
69 loss, or permanent loss of use of, both legs or both arms or one leg and one arm or by and for the
70 use of a veteran who has been determined to be permanently disabled by the medical advisory
71 board established under section 8C of chapter 90 and has been issued a disabled veteran number
72 plate or a purple heart recipient plate under section 2 of said chapter 90; provided that this
73 exemption shall apply to 1 motor vehicle only owned and registered for the personal,
74 noncommercial use of such person. A person issued a purple heart recipient plate shall not have
75 to forfeit their purple heart recipient plate for a disabled veteran number plate in order to receive

76 the exemption from the tax in this paragraph. A person issued a purple heart recipient plate and a
77 disability placard shall receive the exemption from the tax in this subsection.

78 SECTION 16. Section 4 of chapter 71 of the General Laws, as so appearing, is hereby
79 amended by striking out, in lines 32 and 39, each time it appears, the word “department” and
80 inserting in place thereof the following words:- executive office.

81 SECTION 17. Section 2 of chapter 90 of the General Laws, as so appearing, is hereby
82 amended by striking out the words “pleasure passenger vehicles owned by veterans who,
83 according to the records of the United States Veterans’ Administration, has been determined to
84 have a service-connected disability rating of 60 per cent or greater and by reason of service in the
85 armed forces of the United States have suffered loss or permanent loss of use of one or both feet;
86 or loss or permanent loss of use of one or both hands; or permanent impairment of vision of both
87 eyes of the following status: central visual acuity of 20/200 or less in the better eye, with
88 corrective glasses, or central visual acuity of more than 20/200 if there is a field defect in which
89 the peripheral field has contracted to such an extent that the widest diameter of visual field
90 subtends an angular distance no greater than twenty degrees in the better eye, or any other
91 disability or handicap of such veterans which may be determined by the medical advisory board
92 as established by section eight C, and”.

93 SECTION 18. The seventh paragraph of said section 2 of said chapter 90, as so
94 appearing, is hereby amended by striking out the third and fourth sentences.

95 SECTION 19. Said section 2 of said chapter 90, as so appearing, is hereby further
96 amended by striking out the words “and the words “Disabled Veteran” for a pleasure passenger
97 vehicle or a pick-up truck owned or leased by and used by a veteran who, according to the

98 records of the United States Veterans' Administration, by reason of service in the armed forces
99 of the United States has suffered loss or permanent loss of use of one or both feet; or loss or
100 permanent loss of use of one or both hands; or permanent impairment of vision of both eyes of
101 the following status: central visual acuity of 20/200 or less in the better eye, with corrective
102 glasses, or central visual acuity of more than 20/200 if there is a field defect in which the
103 peripheral field has contracted to such an extent that the widest diameter of visual field subtends
104 an angular distance no greater than 20 degrees in the better eye, or any other disability or
105 handicap”.

106 SECTION 20. Said section 2 of said chapter 90, as so appearing, is hereby further
107 amended by striking out the twelfth paragraph.

108 SECTION 21. Said section 2 of said chapter 90, as so appearing, is hereby further
109 amended by striking out the fifteenth through seventeenth, inclusive, paragraphs.

110 SECTION 22. Said section 2 of said chapter 90, as so appearing, is hereby further
111 amended by striking out the nineteenth through twenty-second, inclusive, paragraphs.

112 SECTION 23. Chapter 90 of the General Laws is hereby amended by inserting after
113 section 2I the following section:-

114 Section 2J. (a) The registrar is hereby authorized, required, and directed to design and
115 maintain a series on distinct and individual license plates recognizing those who have served in
116 the military and for those who deserve special recognition relating to or deriving from military
117 service. Any veteran meeting the definition of a veteran in clause forty-third of section 7 of
118 chapter 4, or section 1 of chapter 115, or is eligible for the annuity provided under section 6C of
119 chapter 115, shall be eligible and entitled to a veteran plate which shall carry the denotation

120 “VETERAN”, upon presentation of satisfactory evidence of such status as determined by the
121 registrar.

122 (b) Veterans ranked as at least 60 per cent disabled by the United States Veterans
123 Administration, including those who have suffered the loss of a limb, permanent visual acuity
124 loss of 20/200 in an eye, or are otherwise determined to be disabled or handicapped by the
125 medical advisory board established in section 8C, shall be entitled to a distinctive disabled
126 veteran plate.

127 (c) Veterans who have been captured and incarcerated by foreign forces in conflict or
128 held as prisoners of war shall be entitled to a distinctive plate recognizing that status.

129 (d) Veterans who are members of the Legion of Valor of the United States Inc. shall be
130 entitled to a distinctive plate recognizing that status. Residents of the commonwealth awarded
131 the Congressional Medal of Honor shall be entitled to a distinctive plate recognizing that status,
132 including, subject to availability, the use of the initials of the award recipient followed by CMH
133 signifying their award.

134 (e) Veterans entitled to a distinctive plate shall be entitled to have a distinctive emblem or
135 decal reflecting service in Operation Enduring Freedom, the receipt of the Iraqi Freedom
136 Campaign Ribbon, an Afghanistan Campaign Ribbon, a Persian Gulf Campaign Ribbon, the
137 receipt of the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal, Southwest Asia Service Medal, Inherent
138 Resolve Campaign Medal, Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal, Vietnam Service
139 Medal, Kosovo Campaign Medal, Prisoner of War Medal.

140 (f) Veterans awarded the Order of the Purple Heart shall be entitled to a distinctive plate
141 indicating that status which shall include the words “COMBAT WOUNDED.”

142 (g) Survivors of the attack upon Pearl Harbor shall be entitled to a distinctive plate
143 reflecting that status and also bearing the word “VETERAN” thereupon.

144 (h) Residents of the commonwealth serving in the national guard, any branch, shall be
145 entitled to a distinctive plate reflecting that status.

146 (i) Residents of the commonwealth awarded the Medal of Liberty under chapter 33 shall
147 be entitled to a distinctive plate reflecting that status.

148 (j) Residents of the commonwealth identifying as a woman veteran who served in any
149 branch shall be entitled to a distinctive decal which the registry of motor vehicles shall design
150 and issue.

151 (k) A veteran who has served in the armed forces and is entitled to veteran plate shall also
152 be entitled to the issuance of a decal or emblem denoting their branch of service.

153 (l) Owners of private vehicles awarded a decoration for valor or gallantry, as defined
154 herein, shall be entitled to a distinctive veteran plate or emblem or decal denoting their award
155 status. The awards references in this paragraph shall be as follows: the Silver Star, the Bronze
156 Star, the Distinguished Flying Cross, the Distinguish Service Cross, the Navy Cross, the Air
157 Force Cross, and any other similar award designated by the secretary of veterans’ services under
158 the auspices of section 1 of chapter 115.

159 (m) A resident of the commonwealth qualifying as a Gold Star parent, child, sibling,
160 grandchild or spouse shall be entitled to either a distinctive plate or an emblem or decal denoting
161 their status. A distinctive plate, under this paragraph, may not be used in conjunction with a
162 motor vehicle which has promotional or advertising material thereupon. A Gold Star Family

163 member is defined as a parent, child, spouse, sibling or grandchild of a member of the armed
164 forces who is killed in action.

165 (n) The next of kin of a member of the armed forces, in possession of a Gold Star Lapel
166 Button under the regulations of the United States Secretary of Defense, shall be entitled to a
167 Gold Star Family distinctive plate. Said button shall not be an eligibility requirement for those
168 who have presented other satisfactory evidence of their status, as determined by the registrar.

169 (o) Under any special recognition or status recognized in this section, the widowed
170 person may not be compelled to surrender their distinctive plate, emblem or decal unless they
171 remarry, cancel or fail to renew registration. If the deceased person was entitled to recognition
172 under any portion of this section but did not apply for special status under this section, the
173 widowed person may nonetheless apply in the stead of their deceased spouse.

174 (p) Any special status under this section shall entitle the bearer to only one special plate,
175 emblem, or decal. However, such person may, at their option, have the distinctive plate, emblem,
176 or decal issued in a form suitable for use on a motorcycle rather than a passenger car.

177 (q) Any plate to which an individual is entitled under this section shall be issued without
178 fee other than the established registration fee for private passenger motor vehicles and
179 motorcycles. The registrar may provide individuals the option of paying an additional fee. Any
180 fees generated under this section shall be distributed to the state-operated veterans' homes on an
181 equal basis, to their special account, up to one-half million dollars for each home. Any excess
182 shall be placed in the special trust fund subject to the control of the secretary of veterans'
183 services.

184 SECTION 24. Subsection (a) of section 244 of chapter 111 of the General Laws, as
185 appearing in the 2022 Official Edition, is hereby amended by striking out, in line 2, the word
186 “commissioner” and inserting in place thereof the following word:- secretary.

187 SECTION 25. Subsection (b) of said section 244 of said chapter 111, as so appearing, is
188 hereby amended by striking out, in lines 28, 35 and 38, each time it appears, the word
189 “commissioner” and inserting in place thereof the following word:- secretary.

190 SECTION 26. Subsection (c) of said section 244 of said chapter 111, as so appearing, is
191 hereby amended by striking out, in line 43, the word “department’s” and inserting in place
192 thereof the following words:- executive office’s.

193 SECTION 27. Said subsection (c) of said section 244 of said chapter 111, as so
194 appearing, is hereby further amended by striking out, in line 43, the word “department” and
195 inserting in place thereof the following words:- executive office.

196 SECTION 28. Section 1 of chapter 115 of the General Laws, as so appearing, is hereby
197 amended by striking out, in lines 3 to 4, the words “wife, husband, widow, widower, mother or
198 father” and inserting in place thereof the following words:- spouse, widowed person or parent.

199 SECTION 29. Said section 1 of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby further
200 amended by striking out, in line 6, the word “his” and inserting in place thereof the following
201 words:- the veteran’s.

202 SECTION 30. Said section 1 of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby further
203 amended by striking out, in lines 8 to 16, inclusive, the words “such child is attending school for
204 the purpose of completing a regulation high school course or its equivalent, or unless he is

205 mentally or physically unable to support himself, and his disability existed before he attained that
206 age, or unless he is under twenty-three years of age, and is a full-time student at an educational
207 institution which maintains a regular faculty and curriculum and has a regularly organized body
208 of students in attendance at the place where its educational activities are carried on” and inserting
209 in place thereof the following words:- the child meets the criteria established for emancipation
210 pursuant to section 28 of chapter 208 or section 9 of chapter 209C or unless the child is mentally
211 or physically unable to support themselves after attaining the age of 23.

212 SECTION 31. Said section 1 of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby further
213 amended by striking out, in line 25, the word “his”, each time it appears, and inserting in place
214 thereof the following word:- their.

215 SECTION 32. Said section 1 of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby further
216 amended by striking out, in line 26, the words “he applies” and inserting in place thereof the
217 following words:- they apply.

218 SECTION 33. Said section 1 of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby further
219 amended by striking out the definition of “veteran” and inserting in place thereof the following
220 definition:-

221 “Veteran”, any person who (a) was a veteran as defined in clause Forty-third, section 7 of
222 chapter 4; or (b) served on active duty, to include active duty solely for training purposes, in the
223 armed forces for at least 90 days and whose last discharge or release was under conditions other
224 than dishonorable; or (c) served on active duty, to include active duty solely for training
225 purposes, in the armed forces, and was awarded a service-connected disability or who died in
226 such service under conditions other than dishonorable; or (d) served in the national guard or as a

227 reservist in any branch of the armed forces, including active duty solely for training purposes,
228 and was awarded a service-connected disability or who died in such service under conditions
229 other than dishonorable; or (e) is determined to be a veteran according to the U.S. Department of
230 Veterans Affairs; provided that, in any case, the service of such person was entered into or
231 served in Massachusetts, or such person has resided in the commonwealth for 1 day except for
232 the purpose of determining the residential eligibility of a deceased veteran's dependents.

233 SECTION 34. Said section 1 of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby further
234 amended by striking out, in lines 54 to 55, the words "as defined in clause Forty-third of section
235 seven of chapter four,".

236 SECTION 35. Section 2 of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby amended by
237 striking out, in lines 1 to 2, the words "as defined in clause Forty-third of section seven of
238 chapter four,".

239 SECTION 36. Said section 2 of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby further
240 amended by striking out, in lines 7, 20, 39, 45 and 98, each time it appears, the word "his" and
241 inserting in place thereof the following word:- the.

242 SECTION 37. Said section 2 of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby further
243 amended by striking out, in lines 8, 12, 20, 66, 75, 103, 123, 131, 139 and 150, each time it
244 appears, the word "He" and inserting in place thereof the following words:- The secretary.

245 SECTION 38. Said section 2 of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby further
246 amended by striking out, in lines 12, 63, 71, 89, 98, 113, 118 and 119, each time it appears, the
247 word "him" and inserting in place thereof the following words:- the secretary.

248 SECTION 39. Said section 2 of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby further
249 amended by striking out, in lines 13, 14, 61, 76, 118, 125, 129, 134 and 142, each time it
250 appears, the word “he” and inserting in place thereof the following words:- the secretary.

251 SECTION 40. Said section 2 of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby further
252 amended by striking out the sixth paragraph.

253 SECTION 41. Said section 2 of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby further
254 amended by striking out, in lines 153 and 156, each time it appears, the word “his” and inserting
255 in place thereof the following word:- a.

256 SECTION 42. Said section 2 of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby further
257 amended by striking out, in line 155, the word “chairman” and inserting in place thereof the
258 following word:- chairperson.

259 SECTION 43. Said section 2 of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby further
260 amended by adding the following 3 paragraphs:-

261 The secretary shall provide, subject to appropriation, a medical assistance benefit over
262 and above other benefits under this chapter. A recipient of the medical assistance benefit shall,
263 where applicable, make use of private, state or federally funded resources before seeking aid
264 under this chapter. The medical assistance benefit shall include but not be limited to covering the
265 cost of those necessary medical visits, procedures, prescriptions and costs. The secretary shall,
266 by regulation or otherwise, make provision to keep the program efficient and economical.

267 The secretary shall provide, subject to the appropriation, a behavioral health assistance
268 benefit over and above other benefits under this chapter. A recipient of the behavioral health

269 assistance benefit shall, where applicable, make use of private, state or federally funded
270 resources before seeking aid under this chapter. The behavioral health assistance benefit shall
271 include but not be limited to covering the cost of those necessary outpatient behavioral health
272 assessments, evaluations, visits, prescriptions, costs and other such treatment as the secretary
273 shall determine through regulations. The secretary shall, by regulation or otherwise, make
274 provision to keep the program efficient and economical.

275 The secretary shall provide, subject to appropriation, a dental assistance benefit over and
276 above other benefits under this chapter. A recipient of the dental assistance benefit shall, where
277 applicable, make use of private, state or federally funded resources before seeking aid under this
278 chapter. The dental assistance benefit shall include but not be limited to covering the cost of
279 those necessary medical visits, procedures, prescriptions and costs. The secretary shall, by
280 regulation or otherwise, make provision to keep the program efficient and economical.

281 SECTION 44. Section 2B of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby amended by
282 striking out, in lines 7 and 8, each time it appears, the word “his” and inserting in place thereof
283 the following word:- a.

284 SECTION 45. Section 3 of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby amended by
285 striking out, in line 17, the following word:- his.

286 SECTION 46. Said section 3 of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby further
287 amended by striking out, in line 18, the following words:- civil war.

288 SECTION 47. Said section 3 of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby further
289 amended by striking out, in lines 18 to 19, the words “his wife or widow” and inserting in place
290 thereof the following words:- a veteran’s spouse or widowed person.

291 SECTION 48. Said section 3 of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby further
292 amended by striking out, in line 20, the word “him” and inserting in place thereof the following
293 words:- the secretary.

294 SECTION 49. Said section 3 of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby further
295 amended by striking out, in line 20, the word “his” and inserting in place thereof the following
296 words:- the agent’s.

297 SECTION 50. Said section 3 of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby further
298 amended by striking out, in line 24, the word “he” and inserting in place thereof the following
299 words:- the veteran.

300 SECTION 51. Said section 3 of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby amended by
301 striking out, in line 24, the word “his” and inserting in place thereof the following words:- the
302 veteran’s.

303 SECTION 52. Said section 3 of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby further
304 amended by striking out, in lines 25 and 27, each time it appears, the word “him” and inserting in
305 place thereof the following words:- the agent.

306 SECTION 53. Section 4 of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby amended by
307 striking out, in lines 4, 5 and 8, each time it appears, the word “his” and inserting in place thereof
308 the following word:- the.

309 SECTION 54. Said section 4 of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby further
310 amended by striking out, in line 14, the word “widow” and inserting in place thereof the
311 following words:- widowed person.

312 SECTION 55. Said section 4 of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby further
313 amended by striking out, in line 20, the word “his” and inserting in place thereof the following
314 word:- their.

315 SECTION 56. Section 5 of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby amended by
316 striking out, in line 2, the word “he” and inserting in place thereof the following words:- the
317 veteran.

318 SECTION 57. Said section 5 of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby further
319 amended by striking out, in line 3, the word “he” and inserting in place thereof the following
320 word:- they.

321 SECTION 58. Said section 5 of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby further
322 amended by striking out, in lines 4, 7, 16, 25, 26, 43, 45, 51, 54, 59, 62, 63 and 66, each time it
323 appears, the word “his” and inserting in place thereof the following word:- their.

324 SECTION 59. Said section 5 of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby further
325 amended by striking out, in lines 5 to 10, the words “unless he has actually resided within the
326 commonwealth continuously for three years next preceding the date of his application for such
327 benefits, nor unless the veteran of whom he is a dependent has actually resided within the
328 commonwealth continuously for three years next preceding the date of such dependent’s
329 application for such benefits” and inserting in place thereof the following words:- except upon
330 like terms.

331 SECTION 60. Said section 5 of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby further
332 amended by striking out, in lines 22 and 27, each time it appears, the word “him” and inserting in
333 place thereof the following word:- them.

334 SECTION 61. Said section 5 of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby further
335 amended by striking out, in line 24, the word “himself” and inserting in place thereof the
336 following word:- themselves.

337 SECTION 62. Said section 5 of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby further
338 amended by striking out in lines 39 and 54, the word “his” and inserting in place thereof the
339 following words:- the veteran’s.

340 SECTION 63. Said section 5 of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby further
341 amended by striking out, in line 42, the word “his” and inserting in place thereof the following
342 words:- the secretary’s.

343 SECTION 64. Said section 5 of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby further
344 amended by striking out, in line 55, the word “he” and inserting in place thereof the following
345 words:- the veteran.

346 SECTION 65. Said section 5 of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby further
347 amended by striking out, in line 57, the word “him” and inserting in place thereof the following
348 words:- the veteran.

349 SECTION 66. Said section 5 of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby further
350 amended by striking out, in line 59, the word “He” and inserting in place thereof the following
351 word:- They.

352 SECTION 67. Said section 5 of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby further
353 amended by striking out, in line 61, the word “he” and inserting in place thereof the following
354 word:- they.

355 SECTION 68. Said section 5 of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby further
356 amended by striking out, in line 74, the word “him” and inserting in place thereof the following
357 words:- them.

358 SECTION 69. Said section 5 of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby further
359 amended by striking out, in line 92, the word “his” and inserting in place thereof the following
360 words:- the veterans’ agent’s.

361 SECTION 70. Said section 5 of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby further
362 amended by striking out, in lines 95, 99 and 103, each time it appears, the word “mother” and
363 inserting in place thereof the following word:- parent.

364 SECTION 71. Said section 5 of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby further
365 amended by striking out, in line 100, the word “her” and inserting in place thereof the following
366 words:- the parent’s own.

367 SECTION 72. Said section 5 of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby further
368 amended by striking out, in lines 102 and 103, each time it appears, the word “his” and inserting
369 in place thereof the following words:- the veteran’s.

370 SECTION 73. Said section 5 of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby further
371 amended by striking out, in line 106, the word “him” and inserting in place thereof the following
372 words:- the secretary.

373 SECTION 74. The seventh paragraph of said section 5 of said chapter 115, as so
374 appearing, is hereby amended by adding the following sentence:- An increase in income from a
375 cost-of-living adjustment made to social security, supplemental security income or social

376 security disability insurance shall not serve to render any recipient ineligible for benefits under
377 this chapter in the year that the cost-of-living adjustment was issued.

378 SECTION 75. Section 5A of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby amended by
379 striking out, in lines 2, 8, 11, 40, 57, 60, and 63 to 64, each time they appear, the words “mother
380 or father” and inserting in place thereof the following word:- parent.

381 SECTION 76. Said section 5A of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby further
382 amended by striking out, in lines 16 to 17, the words “mother’s or father’s” and inserting in place
383 thereof the following word:- parent’s.

384 SECTION 77. Said section 5A of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby further
385 amended by striking out, in line 33, the word “him” and inserting in place thereof the following
386 word:- them.

387 SECTION 78. Said section 5A of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby further
388 amended by striking out, in line 41, the words “in his” and inserting in place thereof the
389 following words:- within their.

390 SECTION 79. Said section 5A of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby further
391 amended by striking out, in line 45, the word “his” and inserting in place thereof the following
392 words:- the secretary’s.

393 SECTION 80. Said section 5A of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby further
394 amended by striking out, in lines 47 to 48, the words “the petition in his own name” and inserting
395 in place thereof the following words:- a petition.

396 SECTION 81. Section 6 of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby amended by
397 striking out, in line 3, the word “him”.

398 SECTION 82. Said section 6 of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby further
399 amended by striking out, in line 12, each time it appears, the word “him” and inserting in place
400 thereof the following words:- the secretary.

401 SECTION 83. Said section 6 of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby further
402 amended by striking out, in lines 15 and 19, each time it appears, the word “he” and inserting in
403 place thereof the following words:- the secretary.

404 SECTION 84. Section 6A of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby repealed.

405 SECTION 85. Section 6B of chapter 115 of the General Laws, as appearing in the 2022
406 Official Edition, is hereby amended by striking out, in lines 19, 28 and 35, each time it appears,
407 the figure “2,000” and inserting in place thereof the following figure:- 2,250.

408 SECTION 86. Said section 6B of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby further
409 amended by striking out, in lines 19, 28 and 35, each time it appears, the figure “2,250” and
410 inserting in place thereof the following figure:- 2,500.

411 SECTION 87. Said section 6B of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby further
412 amended by striking out, in lines 21 and 30, each time it appears, the word “his” and inserting in
413 place thereof the following words:- the veteran’s.

414 SECTION 88. Section 7 of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby amended by
415 striking out, in line 4, the word “He” and inserting in place thereof the following words:- The
416 burial agent.

417 SECTION 89. Said section 7 of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby further
418 amended by striking out, in line 8, the words “his wife, or his widow” and inserting in place
419 thereof the following words:- spouse, or widowed person.

420 SECTION 90. Said section 7 of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby further
421 amended by striking out, in line 10, the word “him” and inserting in place thereof the following
422 words:- the burial agent.

423 SECTION 91. Said section 7 of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby further
424 amended by striking out, in lines 12 and 14, each time it appears, the word “he” and inserting in
425 place thereof the following words:- the burial agent.

426 SECTION 92. Said section 7 of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby further
427 amended by striking out, in line 17, the word “his” and inserting in place thereof the following
428 word:- their.

429 SECTION 93. Section 8 of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby amended by
430 striking out, in line 23, the words “widow, or widower” and inserting in place thereof the
431 following words:- widowed person.

432 SECTION 94. Section 9 of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby amended by
433 striking out, in line 3, the words “, as defined in clause Forty-third of section seven of chapter
434 four,”.

435 SECTION 95. Said chapter 115 of the General Laws, as so appearing, is hereby amended
436 by inserting after Section 9 the following section:-

437 Section 9A. The executive office of veterans’ services shall have the authority to operate,
438 maintain and expand the Massachusetts Veterans’ Memorial Cemetery located in Agawam and
439 the Massachusetts Veterans’ Memorial Cemetery located in Winchendon, and may add new
440 locations, subject to the availability of funds, to meet veterans and dependents’ needs. This
441 authority includes, but is not limited to, the maintenance and upkeep of the cemetery grounds,
442 facilities and infrastructure, the burial and interment services in accordance with established
443 federal protocols and regulations and the overall management and administration of the
444 cemeteries. The executive office may adopt additional rules, regulations and policies as
445 necessary to fulfill its responsibilities and ensure the proper functioning of the cemeteries under
446 its control.

447 SECTION 96. Section 10 of chapter 115 of the General Laws, as appearing in the 2022
448 Official Edition, is hereby amended by striking out, in line 23, the word “his” and inserting in
449 place thereof the following word:- their.

450 SECTION 97. Said section 10 of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby further
451 amended by striking out, in lines 31 and 32, the words “duties of his office” and inserting in
452 place thereof the following words:- office’s duties.

453 SECTION 98. Said section 10 of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby further
454 amended by striking out, in line 32, the word “his” and inserting in place thereof the following
455 word:- the.

456 SECTION 99. Said section 10 of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby further
457 amended by striking out, in line 37, the words “his duties as treasurer of the district” and
458 inserting in place thereof the following words:- the district treasurer’s duties.

459 SECTION 100. Section 11 of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby amended by
460 striking out, in lines 2 and 5, each time it appears, the word “his” and inserting in place thereof
461 the following word:- their.

462 SECTION 101. Said section 11 of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby further
463 amended by striking out, in lines 3 to 4, the word “chairman” and inserting in place thereof the
464 following word:- chairperson.

465 SECTION 102. Said section 11 of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby further
466 amended by striking out, in line 24, the word “his” and inserting in place thereof the following
467 word:- the.

468 SECTION 103. Section 15 of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby amended by
469 striking out, in line 4, the words “he, and his duly accredited agents,” and inserting in place
470 thereof the following words: they and their agents.

471 SECTION 104. Said section 15 of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby further
472 amended by striking out, in line 11, the word “his” and inserting in place thereof the following
473 word:- a.

474 SECTION 105. Section 16 of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby amended by
475 inserting after the first sentence the following sentence:- The veterans equality review board
476 shall also ensure that veterans who received an other than honorable discharge because of sex,
477 race, color, religious creed, national origin, age, genetic information, ancestry, marital status,
478 disability or any U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs category eligible for upgrade, including,
479 but not limited to, mental health conditions, military sexual trauma and traumatic brain injury,
480 receive state-based veteran benefits.

481 SECTION 106. Section 9 of chapter 115A of the General Laws, as so appearing, is
482 hereby amended by striking out, in line 3, the words “home in the city of Chelsea” and inserting
483 in place thereof the following word:- homes.

484 SECTION 107. Section 3 of chapter 115B of the General Laws, as so appearing, is
485 hereby amended by striking out, in line 16, the words “home in the city of Chelsea; and the chair
486 of the board of trustees of the veterans’ home in the city of Holyoke” and inserting in place
487 thereof the following word:- homes.

488 SECTION 108. Subsection (c) of section 73B of chapter 272 of the General Laws, as so
489 appearing, is hereby amended by striking out, in lines 18 and 23, each time it appears, the word
490 “department” and inserting in place thereof the following words:- executive office.

491 SECTION 109. Section 11 of chapter 276A of the General Laws, as so appearing, is
492 hereby amended by striking out, in lines 6 and 13, each time it appears, the word “department”
493 and inserting in place thereof the following words:- executive office.

494 SECTION 110. Section 3 of chapter 71 of the acts of 1996, as amended by section 2 of
495 chapter 468 of the acts of 2002, is hereby amended by striking out the second paragraph.

496 SECTION 111. Notwithstanding any general or special law to the contrary, any member
497 of a retirement system who is a member in service and a veteran who failed to make the purchase
498 authorized in paragraph (h) of subdivision (1) of section 4 of chapter 32 of the General Laws
499 within the required 180 days pursuant to chapter 71 of the acts of 1996, as amended, shall be
500 given a 1-time opportunity to apply to the retirement system to make said purchase within 1
501 years from the effective date of this act. Each retirement system shall provide written notice to

502 all members in service of their potential eligibility for this purchase within 90 days of the
503 effective date of this act.

504 SECTION 112. Notwithstanding any general or special law to the contrary, the secretary
505 of veterans' services, in coordination with the executive office of health and human services,
506 shall convene a working group to review alternative therapies for mental health treatments for
507 veterans. The working group shall: (i) study whether psychedelic therapy is associated with
508 improved outcomes among veterans with diagnosed mental health disorders; (ii) evaluate
509 literature, research trials and expert opinions to determine if psychedelic therapy is associated
510 with improved outcomes regarding mental health treatment for veterans; and (iii) issue
511 recommendations regarding the provision of psychedelic therapy to treat veterans with mental
512 health disorders in Massachusetts. As used in this section, "psychedelic therapy" shall mean the
513 use of psilocybin, ketamine, or 3,4 methylenedioxymethamphetamine, under the direction of a
514 health care provider, to treat mental health disorders.

515 The secretary shall appoint the following members of the working group: 2 members who
516 shall represent medical centers or hospitals in Massachusetts that serve veterans; 2 members who
517 shall represent health insurance companies; 2 members who shall represent veteran-services
518 organizations; 1 member who shall represent an organization currently studying this subject
519 matter; and such other members as the secretary deems necessary. The members of the working
520 group shall have experience in behavioral health or veteran services. The secretary may
521 designate a chair of the working group.

522 Not later than January 1, 2025, the working group shall file a report of its findings and
523 any recommendations with the clerks of the senate and house of representatives, the joint

524 committee on veterans and federal affairs, and the joint committee on mental health, substance
525 use and recovery.

526 SECTION 113. (a) Notwithstanding any general or special law to the contrary, the
527 executive office of veterans' services shall administer a 2-year pilot program to offer
528 reimbursement to veterans who: (i) have a service-related injury that necessitates treatment for
529 infertility through in vitro fertilization; (ii) reside in the commonwealth; and (iii) would
530 otherwise be eligible to receive coverage for that treatment by the U.S. Department of Veterans
531 Affairs but have been denied coverage solely due to being married to a spouse of the same sex.

532 (b) Eligible veterans seeking coverage under this section shall submit appropriate
533 documentation, as the executive office requires, which may include, but not be limited to, proof
534 of denial of coverage from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and medical documentation
535 supporting the need for treatment. Any information provided under this section to the executive
536 office shall be held confidential consistent with federal and state law.

537 (c) The executive office may contract with a vendor to facilitate the program and develop
538 policies or procedures required for the administration of this section.

539 (d) There shall be a working group to review and advise the executive office on the pilot
540 program. The secretary of the executive office of veterans' services shall assess and determine
541 who will be on the working group, and at least one member shall be a veteran who shall
542 represent the interest of same sex couples.

543 The working group shall advise on matters including, but not limited to, the following: (i)
544 the implementation of the pilot program; (ii) the potential long-term funding strategies to provide
545 reimbursement for in vitro fertilization for the population of veterans described in subsection (a);

546 and (iii) any additional areas where veterans receive disparate access to health care services from
547 the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, not limited to sexual orientation or marital status.

548 (e) Not later than 3 months after the conclusion of the pilot program, the executive office
549 shall post a report on its website which describes the activities of the pilot program and all the
550 working group's recommendations.

551 SECTION 114. Sections 43 and 85 shall take effect as of July 1, 2024.

552 SECTION 115. Section 86 shall take effect as of July 1, 2025.

553 SECTION 116. Sections 15 and 17 through 23, inclusive, shall take effect 6 months from
554 the effective date of this act.