

HOUSE No. 4505

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PRESENTED BY:

Paul J. Donato

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 to establish a pilot program to improve communications between local law enforcement and victims in Middlesex County.

PETITION OF:

NAME:	DISTRICT/ADDRESS:	DATE ADDED:
<i>Paul J. Donato</i>	<i>35th Middlesex</i>	<i>2/22/2024</i>

HOUSE No. 4505

By Representative Donato of Medford, a petition (subject to Joint Rule 12) of Paul J. Donato for legislation to authorize the Middlesex District Attorney's Office to establish a pilot program to improve communications between local law enforcement and victims in Middlesex County. The Judiciary.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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

An Act to establish a pilot program to improve communications between local law enforcement and victims in Middlesex County.

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 2 of chapter 28 of the acts of 2023 is hereby amended by inserting
2 after item 0330-0300 the following item:-

3 0330-0330 For use by the trial court to improve and modernize the Massachusetts trial
4 court case access website located at masscourts.org \$

5 SECTION 2. (a) As used in this section, the following words shall have the following
6 meanings, unless the context clearly requires otherwise:-

7 “Department”, the department of state police

8 “Local law enforcement agency”, a law enforcement entity for a city or town in
9 Middlesex county.

10 “Office”, the Middlesex District Attorney's Office.

11 “System”, a public safety citizen communications system established in subsection (b).

12 “Victim of a crime” or “victim”, a person who has suffered harm from a crime that
13 occurred in Middlesex county.

14 (b) (1) The office shall establish a 4 year pilot program for the purpose of improving
15 communication between: (i) the office; (ii) local law enforcement agencies; (iii) the department;
16 and (iv) the victim of a crime. As part of the pilot program, the office shall establish a public
17 safety citizen communications system that sends automated updates and messages to the victim
18 of a crime without requiring the victim to: (I) download an application for completion; (ii) create
19 an account; or (iii) register through a website, telephone call or other method used to receive
20 automated updates including, but not limited to, emails or text messages. The office shall
21 determine the process by which a victim of a crime opts into the system.

22 (2) The automated updates and messages sent via the system shall include text messages
23 and emails, which may include, but shall not be limited to, the following information: (i) when
24 an incident report is created; (ii) updates on the involvement of a local law enforcement agency,
25 the department or the office; (iii) when a report was filed and received by a local law
26 enforcement agency, the department or the office; (iv) when a case has been opened by a local
27 law enforcement agency or the department; (v) when an arrest has been made relating to the case
28 (vi) when a case is pending forensic results; (vii) when a case has been sent to the office for
29 prosecution; (viii) when a case has been closed by a local law enforcement agency, the
30 department or the office; (ix) updates on other relevant information to the case determined by the
31 office; (x) court dates; and (xi) victim resources specific to the type of crime committed,
32 which may include hyperlinks or PDF attachments. Nothing in this section shall prevent the

33 office or a local law enforcement agency from communicating with the victim of a crime over
34 the phone or in person.

35 (3) The office shall create procedures for local law enforcement agencies and the
36 department to provide the information pursuant to paragraph (2) to the office.

37 (4) The system shall offer messaging and survey functions in multiple languages that are
38 appropriate for victims of crimes, including messages and survey responses on an English
39 language dashboard for review by local law enforcement agencies, the department and the office.

40 (5) The system shall allow the victim of a crime to be able to choose the language
41 interface while using the system.

42 (c) In implementing the pilot program, the office shall seek to:

43 (i) ensure transparency, accountability, and effective communication from the beginning
44 through the end of the victim's interaction with local law enforcement agencies, the department
45 or the office;

46 (ii) continue to improve the notification capabilities to the victim of a crime;

47 (iii) provide all relevant information to the victim of a crime in an expedient manner; and

48 (iv) expand the office's advocacy for victims of a crime and witnesses of a crime.

49 SECTION 3. (a) The office shall, no later than 1 year after the initiation of the pilot
50 program, submit an annual report to the chairs of the joint committee on the judiciary detailing:

51 (i) the status of the pilot program;

52 (ii) the participation between victims, local law enforcement agencies, the department
53 and the office with the system including, but not limited to, the total number of victims who
54 opted into the system and the city or town in Middlesex county where the case is located; and

55 (iii) a summary of the responses from the messaging and survey functions by victims of a
56 crime pursuant to paragraph (4) of subsection (b) on the successes of the system and possible
57 improvements that could be made to the system, provided that no personally identifying
58 information shall be included.

59 (b) At the end of the 4 year pilot program, the office shall provide a report on the overall
60 evaluation of the program to the chairs of the joint committee on the judiciary. The report shall
61 make recommendations on:

62 (i) the feasibility and efficacy of permanently adopting the system as an optional
63 standardized pathway for providing automated updates and messages to victims in Middlesex
64 county;

65 (ii) the feasibility and efficacy of permanently adopting the system as an optional
66 standardized pathway for providing automated updates and messages to victims in all counties in
67 the commonwealth; and

68 (iii) if the system was successful as measured by the number of victims of a crime
69 participating in the system and the value of online notification for victims of a crime.