

SENATE No. 1114

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PRESENTED BY:

Michael J. Barrett

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 eliminate health disparities in the commonwealth.

PETITION OF:

NAME:	DISTRICT/ADDRESS:
<i>Michael J. Barrett</i>	<i>Third Middlesex</i>
<i>Mary S. Keefe</i>	<i>15th Worcester</i>
<i>James B. Eldridge</i>	<i>Middlesex and Worcester</i>
<i>Barbara L'Italien</i>	<i>Second Essex and Middlesex</i>
<i>Kenneth I. Gordon</i>	<i>21st Middlesex</i>
<i>Mark C. Montigny</i>	<i>Second Bristol and Plymouth</i>

SENATE No. 1114

By Mr. Barrett, a petition (accompanied by bill, Senate, No. 1114) of Michael J. Barrett, Mary S. Keefe, James B. Eldridge, Barbara L'Italien and other members of the General Court for legislation to eliminate health disparities in the commonwealth. Public Health.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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

An Act to eliminate 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. Section 16 of chapter 6A of the general laws, as appearing in the 2012
2 Official Edition, is hereby amended by striking out, in line 35, the words “and (7)” and inserting
3 in place thereof the following words:- (7) the office of health equity; and (8).

4 SECTION 2. Subsection (a) of section 16O of said chapter 6A, as appearing in section 16
5 of chapter 38 of the acts of 2013, is hereby amended by striking out the second sentence and
6 inserting in place thereof the following sentence:-

7 The council shall make recommendations to the director of the office of health equity to
8 reduce and eliminate disparities in access to quality health care and health outcomes based on
9 racial, ethnic and disability status.

10 SECTION 3. Paragraph (b) of said section 16O of said chapter 6A, as so appearing, is
11 hereby amended by inserting after the words “the commissioner of public health or a designee,
12 who shall serve ex officio” the following words:-

13 ; the director of the office of health equity, or a designee.

14 SECTION 4. Said chapter 6A is hereby further amended by adding the following
15 section:-

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

18 “Health disparities”, differences in the incidence, prevalence, mortality and burden of
19 diseases and other adverse health conditions, in the access to or receipt of health care, or both,
20 that disproportionately affects certain racial and ethnic groups, as determined by the office, and
21 people with disabilities.

22 “Office”, the office of health equity.

23 (b) There shall be an office of health equity within the executive office of health and
24 human services. The office shall be in the charge of a director, who shall report directly to the
25 secretary of health and human services. The health disparities council, established in section
26 16O, shall serve as an advisory board to the office of health equity.

27 (c) The office, subject to appropriation, shall coordinate all activities of the
28 commonwealth to eliminate health disparities. The office shall set goals for the reduction of
29 health disparities and prepare an annual plan for the commonwealth to eliminate health
30 disparities.

31 (d) The office, subject to appropriation, shall collaborate with other state agencies of the
32 commonwealth on health disparities reduction initiatives to address the social and economic
33 factors that influence health inequality. The office shall also consider and make

34 recommendations regarding subpopulations among racial and ethnic minorities and people with
35 disabilities that experience the highest levels of disparity in health and health care. The state
36 agencies shall include, but not be limited to, the executive office of health and human services,
37 the executive office of housing and economic development, the executive office of public safety
38 and security, the executive office of energy and environmental affairs, the Massachusetts
39 Department of Transportation, the executive office of labor and workforce development and the
40 executive office of education. The office shall facilitate communication and partnership between
41 state agencies to develop greater understanding of the intersection between agency activities and
42 health outcomes. The office shall facilitate the development of interagency initiatives to address
43 the social and economic determinants of health and health disparity issues including, but not
44 limited to, (i) healthcare access and quality, (ii) housing availability and quality, (iii)
45 transportation availability, location and cost, (iv) community policing and safe spaces, (v) air,
46 water and land usage and quality, (vi) employment and workforce development and (vii)
47 education access and quality.

48 (e) The office, subject to appropriation, shall evaluate the effectiveness of programs and
49 interventions to eliminate health disparities and identify best practices and model programs for
50 the commonwealth.

51 (f) The office, subject to appropriation, shall prepare an annual health disparity report
52 card. The report card shall evaluate the progress of the commonwealth toward eliminating health
53 disparities and, whenever possible, use quantifiable measures and comparative benchmarks. The
54 report card shall report on progress on a state and regional basis, based on regions determined by
55 the office. The office shall hold public hearings in each determined region of the commonwealth
56 to receive public information on the topics of the report card. The report card shall be delivered

57 to the governor, speaker of the house of representatives and president of the senate and the
58 members of the health disparities council, established under section 16O of chapter 6A, before
59 July 1 and shall be posted on the website of the office.

60 SECTION 5. Subsection (g) of section 8 of chapter 6D of the general laws, as so
61 appearing, is hereby amended by inserting after the second sentence the following sentence:- The
62 commission shall establish goals that are intended to reduce health care disparities in racial,
63 ethnic and disabled communities and in doing so shall seek to incorporate the recommendations
64 of the health disparities council and the office of health equity.