

SENATE No. 2295

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

—
In the Year Two Thousand Fourteen
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SENATE, Tuesday, July 22, 2014

The committee on Ways and Means, to whom was referred the House Bill to eliminate racial and ethnic health disparities in the commonwealth (House, No. 3888); reports, recommending that the same ought to pass with an amendment striking out all after the enacting clause and inserting in place thereof the text of Senate document numbered 2295; and by striking out the title and inserting in place thereof the following title “An Act to eliminate health disparities in the Commonwealth”.

For the committee,
Stephen M. Brewer

SENATE No. 2295

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In the Year Two Thousand Fourteen

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

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

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

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

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

21 “Office”, the office of health equity.

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

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

30 (d) The office, subject to appropriation, shall collaborate with other state agencies of the
31 commonwealth on health disparities reduction initiatives to address the social and economic
32 factors that influence health inequality. The office shall also consider and make
33 recommendations regarding subpopulations among racial and ethnic minorities and people with
34 disabilities that experience the highest levels of disparity in health and health care. The state
35 agencies shall include, but not be limited to, the executive office of health and human services,
36 the executive office of housing and economic development, the executive office of public safety
37 and security, the executive office of energy and environmental affairs, the Massachusetts
38 Department of Transportation, the executive office of labor and workforce development and the

39 executive office of education. The office shall facilitate communication and partnership between
40 state agencies to develop greater understanding of the intersection between agency activities and
41 health outcomes. The office shall facilitate the development of interagency initiatives to address
42 the social and economic determinants of health and health disparity issues including, but not
43 limited to, (i) healthcare access and quality, (ii) housing availability and quality, (iii)
44 transportation availability, location and cost, (iv) community policing and safe spaces, (v) air,
45 water and land usage and quality, (vi) employment and workforce development and (vii)
46 education access and quality.

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

50 (f) The office, subject to appropriation, shall prepare an annual health disparity report
51 card. The report card shall evaluate the progress of the commonwealth toward eliminating health
52 disparities and, whenever possible, use quantifiable measures and comparative benchmarks. The
53 report card shall report on progress on a state and regional basis, based on regions determined by
54 the office. The office shall hold public hearings in each determined region of the commonwealth
55 to receive public information on the topics of the report card. The report card shall be delivered
56 to the governor, speaker of the house of representatives and president of the senate and the
57 members of the health disparities council, established under section 16O of chapter 6A, before
58 July 1 and shall be posted on the website of the office.

59 SECTION 5. Subsection (g) of section 8 of chapter 6D of the General Laws, as appearing
60 in the 2012 Official Edition, is hereby amended by inserting after the second sentence the

61 following sentence:- The commission shall establish goals that are intended to reduce health care
62 disparities in racial, ethnic and disabled communities and in doing so shall seek to incorporate
63 the recommendations of the health disparities council and the office of health equity.