

SENATE No. 2610

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

—
In the One Hundred and Ninety-First General Court
(2019-2020)
—

SENATE, March 26, 2020.

The committee on Mental Health, Substance Use and Recovery to whom was referred the petition (accompanied by bill, Senate, No. 1143) of James B. Eldridge, Michael O. Moore, Bruce E. Tarr and Denise Provost for legislation relative to equity in suicide prevention,- reports the accompanying bill (Senate, No. 2610).

For the committee,
Julian Cyr

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**In the One Hundred and Ninety-First General Court
(2019-2020)**

An Act relative to equity in suicide prevention.

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 219 of chapter 69 of the acts of 2018 is hereby amended by inserting the
2 following subsections after subsection (d):-

3 (e) There shall be a special commission to study the prevention of suicide among
4 prisoners and the provision of mental health services to prisoners in correctional facilities. The
5 commission shall consist of 13 members: 1 of whom shall be the commissioner of the
6 department of mental health or the commissioner’s designee who shall serve as chair; 1 of whom
7 shall be the commissioner of the department of correction or the commissioner’s designee; 1 of
8 whom shall be the commissioner of the department of public health or the commissioner’s
9 designee; 1 of whom shall be the secretary of the executive office of public safety or the
10 secretary’s designee; 1 of whom shall be a person appointed by the speaker of the house of
11 representatives; 1 of whom shall be a person appointed by the minority leader in the house of
12 representatives; 1 of whom shall be a person appointed by the president of the senate; 1 of whom
13 shall be a person appointed by the minority leader of the senate; 1 of whom shall be appointed by
14 the president of the Massachusetts correction officers federated union or their designee; 1 of

15 whom shall be appointed by the president of the Massachusetts Psychological Society or
16 designee; and 5 persons appointed by the governor, 1 of whom shall be a representative of a legal
17 advocacy organization that has expertise with issues related to prisons and prisoners, 1 of whom
18 shall be a representative of a community organization that works with prisoners and their
19 families, 1 of whom shall be a representative of an organization that specializes in suicide
20 prevention, 1 of whom shall be a representative of an organization that represents sheriffs, and 1
21 of whom shall be a current or formerly incarcerated person who has experienced prison mental
22 health care.

23 (f) The commission shall review the state of suicide prevention programs in
24 Massachusetts' correctional facilities and develop model plans, recommend program changes,
25 highlight budget priorities and recommend best practices that could be utilized to reduce prisoner
26 suicide and improve the provision of mental health services to prisoners. The commission shall:
27 (1) examine and evaluate the current jail and prison suicide prevention policies; (2) develop
28 recommendations for improving correctional facility intake screening and bookkeeping; (3)
29 examine and develop recommendations for improving identification, referral, and evaluation of
30 individual suicide risk; (4) provide recommendations for improving communication between
31 detention facility staff and arresting or transporting officers, as well as between detention facility
32 staff and potentially suicidal inmates; (5) examine and develop recommendations for improving
33 housing designated for inmates with mental health conditions, including but not limited to
34 residential treatment units, secure adjustment units and secure treatment units; (6) develop
35 recommendations for improving observation and treatment plans for inmates identified as
36 suicidal; (7) provide recommendations for improving suicide identification and intervention; (8)
37 evaluate and provide recommendations on whether there is adequate staffing of mental health

38 professionals at correctional facilities; (9) evaluate and provide recommendations on the use of
39 mental health watch for prisoners, including but not limited to, examining how it is determined
40 whether a prisoner is placed under mental health watch and the conditions under which a
41 prisoner is held while on mental health watch; (10) evaluate and provide recommendations on
42 the standards for transferring a prisoner from mental health watch within a regular correctional
43 facility to a specialized hospital; (11) collect and report data from jails and prisons over the
44 previous three fiscal years on the number of suicides committed, the number that occur in
45 general population or in specialized units, the number broken down by race, gender, gender
46 identity, sexual orientation and other protected status as the commission deems fit, the number
47 broken down by age and the number broken down by open mental health case; and (12) evaluate
48 and provide recommendations regarding provision of mental health care and other policy,
49 programming, or conditions of confinement that may be developed or changed to help prevent
50 suicide.

51 (g) Appointments shall be made not later than 30 days after the effective date of this
52 legislation. The chairperson shall meet with the commission not later than 60 days after the
53 effective date of this legislation.

54 (h) Members shall not receive compensation for their services but may receive
55 reimbursement for the reasonable expenses incurred in carrying out their responsibilities as
56 members of the commission.

57 (i) The commission may hold public hearings to assist in the collection and evaluation of
58 data and testimony.

59 (j) The commission shall submit its findings and recommendations, together with drafts
60 of legislation necessary to carry those recommendations into effect, by filing the same with the
61 clerks of the house of representatives and senate, the house and senate committees on ways and
62 means, the joint committee on public safety and homeland security, the joint committee on the
63 judiciary, and the joint committee on mental health and substance abuse not later than December
64 31, 2020.