

SENATE No. 608

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PRESENTED BY:

Jason M. Lewis

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 racial and ethnic health disparities in the Commonwealth.

PETITION OF:

NAME:	DISTRICT/ADDRESS:
<i>Jason M. Lewis</i>	<i>Fifth Middlesex</i>
<i>Benjamin Swan</i>	<i>11th Hampden</i>
<i>Linda Dorcena Forry</i>	<i>First Suffolk</i>
<i>Sal N. DiDomenico</i>	<i>Middlesex and Suffolk</i>
<i>Tricia Farley-Bouvier</i>	<i>3rd Berkshire</i>
<i>James B. Eldridge</i>	<i>Middlesex and Worcester</i>
<i>Sonia Chang-Diaz</i>	<i>Second Suffolk</i>
<i>Byron Rushing</i>	<i>9th Suffolk</i>
<i>Barbara L'Italien</i>	<i>Second Essex and Middlesex</i>
<i>James J. O'Day</i>	<i>14th Worcester</i>
<i>Evandro C. Carvalho</i>	<i>5th Suffolk</i>
<i>Jeffrey Sánchez</i>	<i>15th Suffolk</i>
<i>Mark C. Montigny</i>	<i>Second Bristol and Plymouth</i>

SENATE No. 608

By Mr. Lewis, a petition (accompanied by bill, Senate, No. 608) of Jason M. Lewis, Benjamin Swan, Linda Dorcena Forry, Sal N. DiDomenico and other members of the General Court for legislation to eliminate racial and ethnic health disparities in the Commonwealth. Health Care Financing.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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

An Act to eliminate racial and ethnic 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. The second paragraph of section 16 of chapter 6A of the General Laws, as
2 appearing in the 2014 Official Edition, is hereby amended by striking out the words “and, (7) the
3 health facilities appeals board ” and inserting in place thereof the following words:-

4 (7) the health facilities appeal board; and (8) the office of health equity.

5 SECTION 2. Section 16O of said chapter 6A, as so appearing, is hereby amended by
6 inserting after the word, “recommendations,” in line 3, the following words:- to the director of
7 the office of health equity.

8 SECTION 3. Said section 16O of said chapter 6A, as so appearing, is hereby further
9 amended by striking out, in line 13, the figure “37” and inserting in place thereof the following
10 figure:- 38.

11 SECTION 4. Said section 16O of said chapter 6A, as so appearing, is hereby further
12 amended by inserting after the word “ officio ”, in line 19, the following words:- ; the director of
13 the office of health equity, or the director’s designee.

14 SECTION 5. Said chapter 6A is hereby amended by inserting after section 16V, as
15 inserted by section 17 of chapter 38 of the acts of 2014, the following 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 “Disparities”, differences in the incidence, prevalence, mortality and burden of diseases
19 and other adverse health conditions that exist among specific racial and ethnic groups.

20 “Office”, the office of health equity.

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

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

29 (d) The office, subject to appropriation, shall collaborate with other state agencies of the
30 commonwealth on disparities reduction initiatives to address the social factors that influence
31 health inequality. The state agencies shall include, but shall not be limited to, the executive office

32 of health and human services, the executive office of housing and economic development, the
33 executive office of public safety and security, the executive office of energy and environmental
34 affairs, the Massachusetts Department of Transportation, the executive office of labor and
35 workforce development and the executive office of education. The office shall facilitate
36 communication and partnership between these agencies to develop greater understanding of the
37 intersections between agency activities and health outcomes. The office shall facilitate
38 development of interagency initiatives to address the social and economic determinants of health
39 and key health disparities issues including, but not limited to, healthcare access and quality;
40 housing availability and quality; transportation availability, location and cost; community
41 policing and safe spaces; air, water, land usage and quality; employment and workforce
42 development; and education access and quality.

43 (e) The office, subject to appropriation, shall evaluate the effectiveness of programs and
44 interventions to eliminate health disparities, identifying best practices and model programs for
45 the state.

46 (f) The secretary of health and human services shall annually, on the day assigned for
47 submission of the budget by the governor to the general court pursuant to section 7H of chapter
48 29, designate major initiatives of the commonwealth affecting the health and health care of
49 residents of the commonwealth. The initiatives may include any activity of the commonwealth
50 including, but not limited to, activities of the executive office of health and human services, the
51 executive office of housing and economic development, the executive office of public safety and
52 security, the executive office of energy and environmental affairs, the Massachusetts Department
53 of Transportation, the executive office of labor and workforce development and the executive
54 office of education.

55 For each major initiative, the office shall prepare a disparities impact statement
56 evaluating the likely positive or negative impact of each initiative on eliminating or reducing
57 racial and ethnic health disparities. The statements shall, to the extent possible, include
58 quantifiable impacts and evaluation benchmarks. The statements shall be posted on the official
59 internet site of the executive office of health and human services and submitted to the clerks of
60 the house of representatives and senate, members of the health disparities council, and the house
61 and senate committees on ways and means.

62 (g) The office, subject to appropriation, shall prepare an annual health disparities report
63 card. The report card shall evaluate the progress of the commonwealth toward eliminating racial
64 and ethnic health disparities, using, where possible, quantifiable measures and comparative
65 benchmarks. The report card shall report on progress on a regional basis, based on regions
66 designated by the office. The office shall hold public hearings in several regions of the
67 commonwealth to get public information on the topics of the report card. The report card shall be
68 delivered to the governor, speaker of the house of representatives and president of the senate and
69 the members of the health disparities council, established under section 16O of chapter 6A,
70 before July 1 of each year and shall be posted on the official internet site of the office or
71 executive office of health and human services.

72 SECTION 6. Section 5 of chapter 6D, as appearing in the 2014 Official Edition, is hereby
73 amended by adding the following sentence:- The council shall establish goals that are intended to
74 reduce health care disparities in racial, ethnic and disabled communities and in doing so shall
75 seek to incorporate the recommendations of the health disparities council and the office of health
76 equity.