

**SENATE . . . . . No. 84**

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The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PRESENTED BY:

***Barbara L'Italien***

*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 creating an interagency child abuse and neglect prevention task force.

PETITION OF:

NAME:	DISTRICT/ADDRESS:
<i>Barbara L'Italien</i>	<i>Second Essex and Middlesex</i>
<i>Jason M. Lewis</i>	<i>Fifth Middlesex</i>
<i>James J. O'Day</i>	<i>14th Worcester</i>
<i>Bruce E. Tarr</i>	<i>First Essex and Middlesex</i>
<i>Brian M. Ashe</i>	<i>2nd Hampden</i>
<i>Marcos A. Devers</i>	<i>16th Essex</i>
<i>Chris Walsh</i>	<i>6th Middlesex</i>
<i>Sal N. DiDomenico</i>	<i>Middlesex and Suffolk</i>
<i>Cynthia S. Creem</i>	<i>First Middlesex and Norfolk</i>

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By Mrs. L'Italien, a petition (accompanied by bill, Senate, No. 84) of Barbara L'Italien, Jason M. Lewis, James J. O'Day, Bruce E. Tarr and other members of the General Court for legislation to create an interagency child abuse and neglect prevention task force. Children, Families and Persons with Disabilities.

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The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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

An Act creating an interagency child abuse and neglect prevention task force.

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:*

1 Chapter 6 of the General Laws, as appearing in the 2012 Official Edition, is hereby  
2 amended by striking out, in its entirety section 215 and inserting in place thereof the following  
3 new section:-

4 (a) There shall be an interagency child welfare task force, hereinafter called the task  
5 force. The secretary of health and human services or his designee and the child advocate shall  
6 serve as its co-chairs. The task force members shall include the designees of the department of  
7 children and families; the department of youth services; the department of transitional assistance;  
8 the department of mental health; the department of developmental services; the department of  
9 public health; the department of elementary and secondary education; the department of early  
10 education and care; the office of medicaid; the executive office of public safety and security; the  
11 executive office of labor and workforce development; the division of insurance; the department  
12 of housing and community development; the juvenile court; the department of probation, the

13 Children’s Behavioral Health Initiative; the Children’s Trust; the Office of the Child Advocate;  
14 the Family and Probate Court; the Committee for Public Counsel Services; seven members  
15 appointed by the governor including a parent of a youth formerly in the care of the  
16 commonwealth; a youth formerly in the care of the commonwealth; a foster parent; a direct line  
17 social worker selected from a list of 6 applicants selected by the statewide advisory council; a  
18 child welfare advocate who is not under contract with any of the member agencies; and 2  
19 members from provider agencies who offer services to children in the care of DCF to include one  
20 agency that provides family stabilization and support services to keep children safely at home  
21 and one that provides foster care.

22 (b) The task force may seek advice broadly from consumers and individuals with  
23 expertise in child welfare and child development including but not limited to social workers of  
24 the department of children and families, medical and mental health practitioners, community  
25 based service providers, child welfare advocates including advocates who are not under contract  
26 with the department, foster parents and academic institutions. Said consumers and experts may  
27 also be asked to serve on any subcommittees of the task force which may be established.

28 (c) The task force shall formulate a comprehensive plan, with annual interagency goals,  
29 periodic benchmarks and cost estimates, to recommend coordinated, system-wide strategies to  
30 prevent child abuse and neglect, including but not limited to those related to mental health,  
31 substance abuse, domestic violence, homelessness and juvenile justice issues. The  
32 comprehensive plan shall look forward 5 years or more, shall be updated annually to plan for the  
33 ensuing 5-year period, shall assess previous efforts and, if appropriate, shall include legislative  
34 and regulatory recommendations.

35 (d) The comprehensive plan shall be filed annually with the governor, the clerks of the  
36 senate and the house, the senate and house committees on ways and means, and the joint  
37 committee on children, families and persons with disabilities.

38 (e) The comprehensive plan shall include an inventory of the services available in the  
39 Commonwealth to address issues that put children at risk of abuse and neglect, identify gaps in  
40 such services, and formulate an interagency plan for addressing those gaps in services. The  
41 purpose of this plan shall be to ensure that, to the extent possible, the Commonwealth's agencies  
42 work in coordination to prevent child abuse and neglect before children and families need to  
43 enter the DCF system and to prevent the need for out-of-home placements.

44 In furtherance of its mission, the task force:

45 (1) shall implement a procedure for children's impact statements in which, before  
46 finalization of a change in eligibility for or a reduction in services that may prevent abuse and  
47 neglect, including but not limited to services to adults for substance abuse, mental health,  
48 domestic violence or family homelessness, the agency whose services would be restricted or  
49 reduced would be required to issue a children's impact statement projecting the impact on child  
50 safety, and on DCF's caseload, as a result of such reduction in services; and

51 (2) may examine the status of and address other issues related to child welfare.