

**SENATE . . . . . No. 1170**

**The Commonwealth of Massachusetts**

PRESENTED BY:

***Paul R. Feeney***

*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 addressing workplace bullying, mobbing, and harassment, without regard to protected class status while promoting healthy workplaces.

PETITION OF:

| NAME:                         | DISTRICT/ADDRESS:                  |                  |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------|
| <i>Paul R. Feeney</i>         | <i>Bristol and Norfolk</i>         |                  |
| <i>Samantha Montaño</i>       | <i>15th Suffolk</i>                | <i>1/25/2023</i> |
| <i>Lindsay N. Sabadosa</i>    | <i>1st Hampshire</i>               | <i>1/26/2023</i> |
| <i>Christopher Hendricks</i>  | <i>11th Bristol</i>                | <i>1/30/2023</i> |
| <i>James C. Arena-DeRosa</i>  | <i>8th Middlesex</i>               | <i>2/1/2023</i>  |
| <i>Erika Uyterhoeven</i>      | <i>27th Middlesex</i>              | <i>2/1/2023</i>  |
| <i>Tackey Chan</i>            | <i>2nd Norfolk</i>                 | <i>2/2/2023</i>  |
| <i>Ryan M. Hamilton</i>       | <i>15th Essex</i>                  | <i>2/2/2023</i>  |
| <i>Michael D. Brady</i>       | <i>Second Plymouth and Norfolk</i> | <i>2/2/2023</i>  |
| <i>Rady Mom</i>               | <i>18th Middlesex</i>              | <i>2/2/2023</i>  |
| <i>James K. Hawkins</i>       | <i>2nd Bristol</i>                 | <i>2/8/2023</i>  |
| <i>Pavel M. Payano</i>        | <i>First Essex</i>                 | <i>2/8/2023</i>  |
| <i>Thomas M. Stanley</i>      | <i>9th Middlesex</i>               | <i>2/9/2023</i>  |
| <i>Michelle M. DuBois</i>     | <i>10th Plymouth</i>               | <i>2/14/2023</i> |
| <i>James B. Eldridge</i>      | <i>Middlesex and Worcester</i>     | <i>2/16/2023</i> |
| <i>James Arciero</i>          | <i>2nd Middlesex</i>               | <i>2/16/2023</i> |
| <i>Kate Lipper-Garabedian</i> | <i>32nd Middlesex</i>              | <i>2/22/2023</i> |

|                          |                        |                  |
|--------------------------|------------------------|------------------|
| <i>Rodney M. Elliott</i> | <i>16th Middlesex</i>  | <i>2/23/2023</i> |
| <i>Jason M. Lewis</i>    | <i>Fifth Middlesex</i> | <i>3/1/2023</i>  |
| <i>Kevin G. Honan</i>    | <i>17th Suffolk</i>    | <i>3/15/2023</i> |
| <i>Jeffrey N. Roy</i>    | <i>10th Norfolk</i>    | <i>3/21/2023</i> |
| <i>Edward J. Kennedy</i> | <i>First Middlesex</i> | <i>4/25/2023</i> |

# SENATE . . . . . No. 1170

By Mr. Feeney, a petition (accompanied by bill, Senate, No. 1170) of Paul R. Feeney, Samantha Montañó, Lindsay N. Sabadosa, Christopher Hendricks and other members of the General Court for legislation to address workplace bullying, mobbing, and harassment, without regard to protected class status while promoting healthy workplaces. Labor and Workforce Development.

[SIMILAR MATTER FILED IN PREVIOUS SESSION  
SEE SENATE, NO. 1200 OF 2021-2022.]

## The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

\_\_\_\_\_  
In the One Hundred and Ninety-Third General Court  
(2023-2024)  
\_\_\_\_\_

An Act addressing workplace bullying, mobbing, and harassment, without regard to protected class status while promoting healthy workplaces.

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

1           The General Laws are hereby amended by inserting after chapter 151E the following  
2 chapter:-

3           Chapter 151G The Healthy Workplace Act

4           SECTION 1. For the purposes of this chapter, the following words and phrases shall have  
5 the following meanings:-

6           “Abusive conduct”, intentional acts, omissions, or both, that a reasonable person would  
7 find abusive, based on the severity, nature, and frequency of the conduct, including, but is not  
8 limited to: repeated verbal abuse such as the use of derogatory remarks, insults, and epithets;

9 verbal, non-verbal, or physical conduct of a threatening, intimidating, or humiliating nature; or  
10 the sabotage or undermining of an employee’s work performance. It shall be considered an  
11 aggravating factor if the conduct exploited an employee’s known psychological or physical  
12 illness or disability. A single act normally shall not constitute abusive conduct, but an especially  
13 severe and egregious act may meet this standard. Online communications shall be included in  
14 determining whether abusive conduct has occurred;

15 “Abusive work environment”, an employment condition when an employer or one or  
16 more its employees, subjects an employee to abusive conduct that causes physical harm,  
17 psychological harm, or both;

18 “Adverse employment action”, an outcome which negatively impacts an employee,  
19 including but not limited to: a termination, demotion, unfavorable reassignment, failure to  
20 promote, disciplinary action, or reduction in compensation.

21 “Constructive discharge”, an adverse employment action where: (1) the employee  
22 reasonably believed he or she was subjected to an abusive work environment; (2) the employee  
23 resigned because of that conduct; and (3) the employer was aware of the abusive conduct prior to  
24 the resignation and failed to stop it.

25 “Psychological harm”, the impairment of a person’s mental health, as established by  
26 competent evidence.

27 “Physical harm”, the impairment of a person’s physical health or bodily integrity, as  
28 established by competent evidence.

29 SECTION 2. (a) No employee shall be subjected to an abusive work environment.

30 (b) No employer or employee shall retaliate in any manner against an employee who has  
31 opposed any unlawful employment practice under this chapter, or who has made a charge,  
32 testified, assisted, or participated in any manner in an investigation or proceeding under this  
33 chapter, including, but not limited to, internal complaints and proceedings, arbitration and  
34 mediation proceedings, and legal actions.

35 SECTION 3. (a) An employer shall be vicariously liable for a violation of section 2 of  
36 this chapter committed by its employee.

37 (b) Where the alleged violation of said section 2 does not include an adverse employment  
38 action, it shall be an affirmative defense for an employer only that:

39 (1) the employer exercised reasonable care to prevent and correct promptly any  
40 actionable behavior; and,

41 (2) the complainant employee unreasonably failed to take advantage of appropriate  
42 preventive or corrective opportunities provided by the employer.

43 SECTION 4. (a) An employee may be individually liable for a violation of section 2 of  
44 this chapter.

45 (b) It shall be an affirmative defense for an employee only that the employee committed a  
46 violation of said section 2 at the direction of the employer, under actual or implied threat of an  
47 adverse employment action.

48 SECTION 5. It shall be an affirmative defense that:

49 (a) The complaint is based on an adverse employment action reasonably made for poor  
50 performance, misconduct, or economic necessity; or,

51 (b) The complaint is based on a reasonable performance evaluation; or,

52 (c) The complaint is based on an employer's reasonable investigation about potentially  
53 illegal or unethical activity.

54 SECTION 6. (a) Where a party is liable for a violation of section 2 of this chapter, the  
55 court may enjoin the defendant from engaging in the unlawful employment practice and may  
56 order any other relief that is deemed appropriate, including, but not limited to: reinstatement,  
57 removal of the offending party from the complainant's work environment, back pay, front pay,  
58 medical expenses, compensation for pain and suffering, compensation for emotional distress,  
59 punitive damages, and attorney's fees.

60 (b) Where a party is liable for a violation of said section 2 that did not include an adverse  
61 employment action, punitive damages may be awarded only when the actionable conduct was  
62 extreme and outrageous.

63 SECTION 7. (a) This chapter shall be enforced solely by a private right of action.

64 (b) An action under this chapter must be commenced no later than one year after the last  
65 act that constitutes the alleged violation of section 2 of this chapter.

66 SECTION 8. (a) Nothing in this chapter shall supersede rights and obligations provided  
67 under collective bargaining laws and regulations.

68 (b) The remedies provided in this chapter shall be in addition to any remedies provided  
69 under any other law, and nothing in this chapter shall relieve any person from any liability, duty,  
70 penalty or punishment provided by any other law, except that if an employee receives workers'  
71 compensation for medical costs for the same injury or illness pursuant to both this chapter and

72 the workers' compensation law, or compensation under both this chapter and that law in cash  
73 payments for the same period of time not working as a result of the compensable injury or illness  
74 or the unlawful employment practice, the payments of workers' compensation shall be  
75 reimbursed from compensation paid under this chapter.