

**HOUSE . . . . . No. 3602**

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**The Commonwealth of Massachusetts**

PRESENTED BY:

***Lindsay N. Sabadosa and Smitty Pignatelli***

*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 establishing peer-run respite centers throughout the Commonwealth.

PETITION OF:

NAME:	DISTRICT/ADDRESS:	DATE ADDED:
<i>Lindsay N. Sabadosa</i>	<i>1st Hampshire</i>	<i>1/18/2023</i>
<i>Smitty Pignatelli</i>	<i>3rd Berkshire</i>	<i>1/19/2023</i>
<i>Bud L. Williams</i>	<i>11th Hampden</i>	<i>6/21/2023</i>
<i>Steven Owens</i>	<i>29th Middlesex</i>	<i>9/29/2023</i>
<i>Jack Patrick Lewis</i>	<i>7th Middlesex</i>	<i>10/4/2023</i>
<i>Natalie M. Higgins</i>	<i>4th Worcester</i>	<i>1/17/2024</i>
<i>Estela A. Reyes</i>	<i>4th Essex</i>	<i>1/23/2024</i>
<i>Michael P. Kushmerek</i>	<i>3rd Worcester</i>	<i>1/23/2024</i>
<i>Susannah M. Whipps</i>	<i>2nd Franklin</i>	<i>2/15/2024</i>

**HOUSE . . . . . No. 3602**

By Representatives Sabadosa of Northampton and Pignatelli of Lenox, a petition (accompanied by bill, House, No. 3602) of Lindsay N. Sabadosa and Smitty Pignatelli that the Department of Mental Health establish peer-run respite centers. Mental Health, Substance Use and Recovery.

**The Commonwealth of Massachusetts**

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

An Act establishing peer-run respite centers throughout 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. Chapter 19 of the General Laws is hereby amended by adding the following  
2 section:-

3 Section 26.

4 (a) As used in this section, the following words shall, unless the context requires  
5 otherwise, have the following meanings:

6 “Peer respite services”, voluntary, trauma-informed, short-term services provided to  
7 adults, age 18 or older, in a home-like environment, which are the least restrictive of individual  
8 freedom, culturally competent, and focus on recovery, resiliency, and wellness.

9 “Peer respites”, voluntary, short-term residential programs that provide community-  
10 based, trauma-informed, person-centered support and prevention on a 24/hour basis in a

11 homelike environment to adults, age 18 or older, who are experiencing emotional or mental  
12 distress either as an immediate precursor to or as a part of a crisis.

13 “Peer-run organization”, a non-profit entity that is controlled and operated by individuals  
14 who have psychiatric histories and/or have faced and navigated other life-interrupting challenges  
15 and which provides a venue for support and advocacy for individuals who experience similar  
16 struggles.

17 “Peer support services”, assistance that promotes engagement, socialization, recovery,  
18 self-sufficiency, self-advocacy, development of natural supports, identification of strengths, and  
19 maintenance of skills learning in other support services.

20 “Peer-run respite center”, a safe, physical space for people experiencing emotional or  
21 mental distress that addresses the social isolation and lack of social connectedness that many  
22 people say they feel. A peer-run respite center shall offer peer support and peer respite services  
23 by Peer Supporters. All peer-run respite centers must be “peer-run organizations” and “peer  
24 respites”, as these terms are defined herein.

25 “Peer supporters”, individuals who are formally trained in the provision of peer support  
26 services, and who have psychiatric histories and/or have faced and navigated similarly life-  
27 interrupting challenges. Such individuals shall be trained in and capable of providing  
28 community-based, trauma-informed, person-centered peer support and peer respite services, as  
29 these terms are defined herein.

30 “LGBTQIA+”, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual, and/or other  
31 gender identities and sexual orientations that individuals may identify as, but which may not fall  
32 within the preceding classifications.

33 “Department”, the department of mental health.

34 “Guests”, an adult, aged 18 and over, who has been accepted by a peer-run respite center  
35 and approved to stay at or receive services from the same.

36 (“Peer-run organizations”, shall mean all of the following: (a) organizations that  
37 specialize in the provision of peer support; (b) where a majority of their leadership (both senior  
38 leadership and Board of Directors) identify as having psychiatric histories and/or navigating  
39 similar life-interrupting challenges; (c) have specialized in the provision of peer support for a  
40 minimum of 5 years; and (d) do not provide any clinical mental health services or whereas  
41 clinical mental health services make up less than 10 percent of their primary services provided.

42 (b) The department shall establish a minimum of 14 peer-run respite centers throughout  
43 the Commonwealth, with each county having at least one peer-run respite center. The department  
44 shall allocate and provide the funding necessary for, and assist with the establishment of the  
45 peer-run respite centers. All peer-run respite centers shall be peer-run organizations and shall  
46 constitute peer respites.

47 (c) Two of the peer-run respite centers shall be established for the purpose of serving  
48 LGBTQIA+ individuals. The LGBTQIA+ peer-run respite centers shall be managed, operated,  
49 and controlled by individuals identifying as members of the LGBTQIA+ community who also  
50 have psychiatric histories or related lived experience. The LGBTQIA+ peer-run respite centers  
51 shall be located in Hampden County and Suffolk County.

52 (d) All peer-run respite centers shall employ peer supporters and be managed and  
53 operated by individuals with psychiatric histories or lived experience with similarly life-  
54 interrupting challenges. All peer supporters shall be required to receive and complete training as

55 required to perform the essential job functions of a peer supporter in this context. All peer  
56 supporters working for the LGBTQIA+ peer respites shall also receive additional training  
57 required to serve members of this community.

58 (e) Each peer-run respite center shall be equipped to provide guests with peer respite and  
59 peer support services as defined herein and required by regulations implementing the provisions  
60 of this section. Each peer-run respite center shall be approved to and capable of providing guests  
61 with short-term, temporary lodging consistent with the definition of “peer respites” herein, as  
62 well as the requirements of this section and regulations implementing the same.

63 (f) The department shall only contract with peer-run organizations for the establishment  
64 of peer-run respite centers under this section. Peer-run respite centers shall be responsible for the  
65 provision, operation, and control of peer respite facilities, as well as peer respite and support  
66 services.

67 (g) The department shall provide funding for all peer-run respite centers that is sufficient  
68 to ensure that each peer-run respite center is capable of providing peer respite and peer support  
69 services. In making such appropriations necessary for this purpose, the department shall consider  
70 and account for funds needed for the purpose of: (i) recruiting peer supporters; (ii) training peer  
71 supporters; (iii) supervising and overseeing peer supporters; and (iv) conducting informational  
72 sessions and training on the functions and qualifications of peer supporters. Peer supporters shall  
73 be compensated at a rate sufficient to ensure that highly trained and skilled peer supporters will  
74 be retained and to maximize the positive impact of support.

75 (h) The department shall work with existing peer-run organizations providing peer respite  
76 services to identify training requirements, which may differ from training requirements for peer

77 supporters or peer specialists working in other contexts, as well as a fidelity tool to establish and  
78 measure ongoing adherence to the basic components of each peer respite based on current  
79 leading guides to peer respites.

80 (i) The department shall also work with existing peer-run organizations, as well as  
81 stakeholders within the LGBTQIA+ community, to develop training requirements for individuals  
82 seeking to work as peer supporters in LGBTQIA+ peer-run respite centers.

83 (n) The department, in consultation with existing peer-run organizations shall develop  
84 regulations for the establishment and operation of the peer-run respite centers. Such regulations  
85 shall employ definitions and criteria consistent with this section.

86 (o) The department shall prepare an annual report on its progress toward implementing  
87 this section. The report shall identify any challenges and barriers regarding implementation, and  
88 detail the department's strategy for overcoming any identified challenges or barriers. The report  
89 shall be provided to the committee on mental health, the committee on public health, and the  
90 house and senate committees on ways and means, and it shall be published on the public website  
91 of the department no later than October 1 each year.