

**HOUSE . . . . . No. 1745**

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The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PRESENTED BY:

*Elizabeth A. Malia*

*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 passage of the accompanying:

An Act providing fair chances for employment.

PETITION OF:

| NAME:                     | DISTRICT/ADDRESS:                   |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <i>Elizabeth A. Malia</i> | <i>11th Suffolk</i>                 |
| <i>Denise Provost</i>     | <i>27th Middlesex</i>               |
| <i>Denise Andrews</i>     | <i>2nd Franklin</i>                 |
| <i>Kay Khan</i>           | <i>11th Middlesex</i>               |
| <i>Cory Atkins</i>        | <i>14th Middlesex</i>               |
| <i>David M. Rogers</i>    | <i>24th Middlesex</i>               |
| <i>Karen E. Spilka</i>    | <i>Second Middlesex and Norfolk</i> |
| <i>John J. Mahoney</i>    | <i>13th Worcester</i>               |
| <i>Brian M. Ashe</i>      | <i>2nd Hampden</i>                  |

**HOUSE . . . . . No. 1745**

By Ms. Malia of Boston, a petition (accompanied by bill, House, No. 1745) of Elizabeth A. Malia and others for legislation to prohibit prospective employer discrimination against persons who are or have been unemployed. Labor and Workforce Development.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

An Act providing fair chances for employment.

*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. Denial of employment opportunities to individuals because they are or  
2 have been unemployed has the intent or necessary effect of burdening local economies and  
3 commerce by reducing job opportunities and diminishing earnings and incomes, thereby:

4 Reducing personal consumption and undermining economic stability and growth;

5 Squandering human capital essential to the state’s economic vibrancy and growth;

6 Increasing demands for state and federal unemployment insurance benefits, reducing trust  
7 fund assets and leading to higher payroll taxes for employers, cuts in benefits for jobless  
8 workers, or both;

9 Imposing additional burdens on publicly funded health and welfare programs; and

10 Depressing income, property and other tax revenues that states and localities rely on to  
11 support operations and institutions essential to building and maintaining and robust economy.

12 The purpose of this legislation is to eliminate the burdens imposed on the state’s  
13 economy and on families and workers in the state when individuals are excluded from job  
14 opportunities because of their current unemployment status, and to prohibit consideration of  
15 current employment status in screening for or filling positions.

16 SECTION 2. Chapter 149 of the General Laws is hereby amended by inserting at the end  
17 thereof the following new section:--

18 Section 189. (a) As used in this section, the term

19 “Affected individual,” means any person who was refused consideration for employment  
20 or was not hired by an employer because of the person’s current employment status, or any  
21 person who was not recruited, screened, considered or referred for employment opportunities by  
22 an employment agency because of the person’s current employment status.

23

24 “Contractor,” means any person that is a party to a government contract other than the  
25 government. The term contractor means the department, division, subcontractor or other unit of a  
26 person responsible for the performance under the contract.

27 “Contracting officer,” means an individual who, by appointment in accordance with  
28 applicable regulations, has the authority to make and administer contracts and to make  
29 determinations and findings with respect to contracts, or the authorized representative of the  
30 contracting officer acting within the limits of the representative’s authority.

31 “Current employment status,” means that an individual is currently employed.

32 “Current unemployment status,” means that an individual is currently unemployed.

33 “Employment agency,” means any person regularly undertaking with compensation and  
34 for profit, to procure employees for an employer or to procure for individuals opportunities to  
35 work for an employer and includes an agent of such a person.

36 “Online job website,” means any Internet-based website that provides online job  
37 postings, regardless of how they are acquired.

38 “Person,” means an individual, partnership, association, corporation, business trust, legal  
39 representative, or any organized group of persons.

40

41 (b) It shall be an unlawful practice for an employer to:

42 (1) Fail to offer employment to, or refuse to consider for employment, an individual  
43 because of the individual’s current unemployment status;

44 (2) Publish, in print, on the Internet or in any other medium, an advertisement or  
45 announcement for any job that includes:

46 (i) Any provision stating or indicating that current employment status is a  
47 requirement or qualification for a job; or

48

49 (ii) Any provision stating or indicating that an employer will not consider an  
50 applicant for employment based on the person's current unemployment status;

51

52 (3) Direct or request that an employment agency take current employment status into  
53 account in screening or referring applicants for employment.

54 (c) It shall be an unlawful practice for an employment agency to:

55 (1) Fail or refuse to consider or refer an individual for employment based on the  
56 individual's current unemployment status;

57 (2) Limit, segregate or classify individuals in any manner that may limit their access to  
58 information about jobs or referral for consideration of jobs because of their current  
59 unemployment status;

60 (3) Publish, in print, on the Internet or in any other medium, an advertisement or  
61 announcement for any job vacancy that includes:

62 (i) Any provision stating or indicating that current employment status is a  
63 requirement or qualification for a job; or

64 (ii) Any provision stating or indicating that an employer will not consider  
65 individuals for employment based on current unemployment status.

66 (d) It shall be an unlawful employment practice for an online job website to publish any  
67 advertisement or announcement for any job vacancy that includes:

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69 (1) Any provision stating or indicating that current employment status is a requirement or  
70 qualification for a job; or

71

72 (2) Any provision stating or indicating that an employer will not consider individuals for  
73 employment based on current unemployment status.

74 (e) It shall be unlawful for any employer or employment agency to:

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76 (1) interfere with, restrain, or deny the exercise of or the attempt to exercise, any right  
77 provided under this section; or

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79 (2) to refuse to hire, to discharge, or in any other manner to discriminate against any  
80 individual for opposing any practice made unlawful by this section.

81 (f) It shall be unlawful for any person to discharge or in any other manner discriminate  
82 against any individual because such individual:

83

84 (1) has filed any charge, or has instituted or caused to be instituted any proceeding, under  
85 or related to this section;

86 (2) has given, or is about to give, any information in connection with any inquiry or  
87 proceeding relating to any right provided under this section; or

88 (3) has testified, or is about to testify, in any inquiry or proceeding relating to any right  
89 provided under this section.

90 (g) Nothing in this section is intended to preclude an employer or employment agency  
91 from considering an individual's employment history, or from examining the reasons underlying  
92 an individual's employment status, in assessing an individual's ability to perform a job or  
93 otherwise making employment decisions about that individual.

94 (h) To ensure compliance with the provisions of this title or any regulation or order  
95 issued under this title, the Attorney General shall have the investigative authority to enter  
96 employer workplaces and examine all employer records related to allegations of violations of  
97 subsections (b) through (d), inclusive. Any employer or employment agency shall make, keep,  
98 and preserve records pertaining to compliance with this section.

99 (i) Any employer or employment agency that violates subsection (b) or (c) shall be liable  
100 to any affected individual:

101

102 (1) for actual damages equal --

103 (i) the amount of

104 (A) any wages, salary, employment benefits, or other compensation denied  
105 or lost to such individual by reason of the violation; or

106 (B) in a case in which wages, salary, employment benefits, or other  
107 compensation have not been denied or lost to the individual, any actual monetary losses  
108 sustained by the individual as a direct result of the violation or damages in the amount of \$1000  
109 per violation per day, whichever is greater; and

110

111 (ii) the interest on the amount described in clause (i)(A) calculated at the  
112 prevailing rate; and

113 (iii) an additional amount as liquidated damages equal to the sum of the amount of  
114 compensation and interest described in subparagraphs (i) and (ii), except that if an employer or  
115 employment agency that has violated subsection (b) or (c) proves to the satisfaction of the court  
116 that the act or omission that violated subsection (b) or (c) was in good faith and that the  
117 employer had reasonable grounds for believing that the act or omission was not a violation of  
118 subsection (b) or (c), the court may, in its discretion, reduce the amount of the liability to the  
119 amount and interest determined under subparagraphs (i) and (ii); and

120

121 (2) for such equitable relief as may be appropriate, including employment and  
122 compensatory and punitive damages.

123 An action to recover the damages or equitable relief prescribed in this subsection may be  
124 maintained against any employer or employment agency in any state court of competent  
125 jurisdiction by any one or more persons for and in behalf of the affected individual, or the  
126 affected individual and other individuals similarly situated.

127

128 The court in such an action shall, in addition to any judgment awarded to the plaintiff,  
129 allow a reasonable attorney's fee, reasonable expert witness fees, and other costs of the action to  
130 be paid by the defendant.

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132 The right provided by this subsection to bring an action by or on behalf of any affected  
133 individual shall terminate on the filing of a complaint by the Attorney General in an action under  
134 subsection (j).

135 (j) The Attorney General shall receive, investigate, and attempt to resolve complaints of  
136 violations of subsections (b) through (f), inclusive. The Attorney General may bring an action in  
137 any state court of competent jurisdiction:

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139 (1) to enjoin violations of this title and seek other relief going forward necessary to  
140 prevent future violations;

141 (2) to recover the damages described in subsection (i);

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143 (3) in the case of a violation of subsections (d) through (f), inclusive, a civil penalty of  
144 not less than \$250 per violation; or

145 (4) any other equitable relief the Court deems appropriate.

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147 Any sums recovered by the Attorney General shall be held in a special deposit account  
148 and shall be paid directly to each affected individual.

149

150 (k) An action under subsection (i) or (j) may be brought not later than 3 years after the  
151 date of the last event constituting the alleged violation for which the action is brought, provided  
152 that the limitations for filing an action shall be tolled during the period that the Attorney General  
153 is considering a complaint against any defendant named in a complaint filed with under  
154 subsection (j).

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156 (l) Payment under a contract awarded by the state, may be terminated and the contractor  
157 who made the contract with the state agency may be debarred in accordance with the  
158 requirements of section 29F of chapter 29, governing government contracts, if the contractor is  
159 found by a court of competent jurisdiction to have engaged in the any of the prohibited acts  
160 enumerated in this section.