SENATE DOCKET, NO. 1704 FILED ON: 1/18/2013

SENATE . . . . . No. 657

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PRESENTED BY:

Katherine M. Clark

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 relative to foster child engagement.

PETITION OF:

NAME:	DISTRICT/ADDRESS:
Katherine M. Clark	*Fifth Middlesex*
F. Jay Barrows	*1st Bristol*
Danielle W. Gregoire	*4th Middlesex*
Tom Sannicandro	*7th Middlesex*
Kenneth I. Gordon	*21st Middlesex*
Theodore C. Speliotis	*13th Essex*
Carlos Henriquez	*5th Suffolk*
Kate Hogan	*3rd Middlesex*
David M. Rogers	*24th Middlesex*
Angelo M. Scaccia	*14th Suffolk*
Brian R. Mannal	*2nd Barnstable*
William N. Brownsberger	*Second Suffolk and Middlesex*
Brian A. Joyce	*Norfolk, Bristol and Plymouth*
Walter F. Timilty	*7th Norfolk*
Matthew A. Beaton	*11th Worcester*

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By Ms. Clark, a petition (accompanied by bill, Senate, No. 657) of Katherine M. Clark, F. Jay Barrows, Danielle W. Gregoire, Tom Sannicandro and other members of the General Court for legislation relative to foster child engagement. The Judiciary.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

In the Year Two Thousand Thirteen

An Act relative to foster child engagement.

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

SECTION 1. Section 21 of chapter 119 of the General Laws, as appearing in the 2010 Official Edition, is hereby amended by adding the following new definition:-

"Distant Relatives", any blood relative, spouse of a blood relative or godparent of a child who is not the father, mother, stepfather, stepmother, brother, sister, stepbrother, stepsister, half brother, half sister, or grandparent.

SECTION 2. Subsection (c) of section 29B of chapter 119, as so appearing, is hereby amended by adding after the first sentence, the following new sentence:-

Upon the first annual permanency hearing, after the permanency plan has been categorized as clause (ii) of subsection (a) of this section, the department shall treat all distant relatives of the child or young adult in the same manner as any other non-related prospective adoptive resource and shall not allow any obscure relative to hinder the pre-adoptive permanency placement or adoption process of the child or young adult.

SECTION 3. Section 29B of chapter 119, as so appearing, is hereby amended in subsection (c) by striking, in line 29, the figure "16" and inserting in place thereof the following figure:- "10".

SECTION 4. Said section 29B of chapter 119 is hereby further amended in subsection (d) by added after the first sentence, the following new sentence:-

The court shall hear from a foster child who has attained age 10 in an age appropriate manner.

20 SECTION 5. Section 24 of chapter 119, as so appearing, is hereby amended by inserting
21 in the fourth paragraph after the second sentence, in line 41, the following sentences:-

22 The judge who presides over the initial hearing shall preside over all future hearings
23 related to the child until the case is resolved or dismissed. This may include entertaining
24 testimony by a video communication. Nothing in this law shall preclude changing the assignment
25 of a case to, or matters being heard by, a different judge in the interests of justice.