HOUSE DOCKET, NO. 3182 FILED ON: 1/16/2015

HOUSE . . . . . No. 1948

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PRESENTED BY:

Gloria L. Fox

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 to establish a balanced health literate program state wide.

PETITION OF:

NAME:	DISTRICT/ADDRESS:
Gloria L. Fox	*7th Suffolk*

HOUSE DOCKET, NO. 3182 FILED ON: 1/16/2015

HOUSE . . . . . No. 1948

By Ms. Fox of Boston, a petition (accompanied by bill, House, No. 1948) of Gloria L. Fox that the Department of Public Health be directed to implement a program for health literacy in healthcare facilities, pharmacies and health centers. Public Health.

[SIMILAR MATTER FILED IN PREVIOUS SESSION
SEE HOUSE, NO. *1957* OF 2013-2014.]

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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

An Act to establish a balanced health literate program state wide.

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

The Department of Public Health should seek avenues of training and implementing health literacy in all Healthcare facilities, Pharmacies, and Health Centers, possible look at the one organization (western MA) that is actively doing health literacy in MA and develop on it. The MA Community Health Workers and other such home care organizations also should make efforts to incorporate health literacy training into their fields.

Medically underserved patients may have particular difficulty communicating with their health care providers and pharmacists. For many reason we must focus on health literacy; Health literacy is the degree to which individuals have the capacity to obtain, process, and understand basic health information and services needed to make appropriate health decisions. [Source: Healthy People 2010] According to the Institute of Medicine, ninety million adult Americans

11 have limited health literacy. Health literacy is a complex phenomenon that involves individuals,
12 families, communities and systems. The concept of health literacy extends to the materials,
13 environments, and challenges specifically associated with disease prevention and health
14 promotion. Health literacy incorporates a range of abilities: reading, comprehending, and
15 analyzing information; decoding instructions, symbols, charts, and diagrams; weighing risks and
16 benefits; and, ultimately, making decisions and taking action.

17 Plain language is a strategy for making written and oral information easier to understand.
18 It is one important tool for improving health literacy. Key elements of Plain Language include:

19 Organizing information so that the most important points come first;

20 Breaking complex information into understandable chunks;

21 Using simple language and defining technical terms; and

22 Using the active voice.

23 Cultural Competency is a strategy that enables organizations to work effectively in cross-
24 cultural situations. Developing and implementing a framework of cultural competence in health
25 systems is an extended process that ultimately serves to reduce health disparities and improve
26 access to high-quality health care. Cultural competence benefits consumers, stakeholders, and
27 communities. Because a number of elements can influence health communication—including
28 behaviors, language, customs, beliefs, and perspectives—cultural competence is also critical for
29 achieving accuracy in medical research. NIH funds and works with researchers nationwide for
30 the development and dissemination of resources designed to enhance cultural competence in
31 health care systems.