

HOUSE No. 1485

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

In the Year Two Thousand Nine

An Act regarding the classifications system for prisoners in 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 Whereas, the cost of imprisoning offenders in the prisons, jails, and houses of correction
2 of the commonwealth has reached approximately one billion dollars per year; and

3 Whereas, no more than ** percent of that cost is at present devoted to education,
4 vocational, and therapeutic programming for offenders; and

5 Whereas, the cost of imprisoning an offender in a high security correctional facility has
6 reached well over fifty thousand dollars per year; and

7 Whereas, the cost of imprisoning an offender in a low security or pre-release facility is
8 approximately sixty percent of the cost of high security confinement; and

9 Whereas, it has been known since at least 1987 that a disproportionate number of
10 incarcerated offenders in this commonwealth are confined in high security facilities; and

11 Whereas, between 1994 and 2004, the percentage of offenders in minimum security
12 facilities declined from twenty three percent to eleven percent and the percentage of offenders in
13 maximum security facilities increased from nine percent to nineteen percent; and

Whereas, twelve percent of Massachusetts offenders are currently being released to our communities from maximum security facilities, which is more than twice the percentage of such releases in other states; and

Whereas, it is more practicable and less expensive to conduct education, vocational, and therapeutic programming for offenders in lower security correctional facilities; and

Whereas, the administrative method for determining the security and rehabilitative programming requirements of each prisoner in the custody of Commonwealth is known as “classification;”

It is hereby resolved, That in order to contain correctional costs and promote the rehabilitation of offenders in a manner that balances the need to prepare offenders to live within the law with the security requirements of public safety; the General Court hereby establishes the following requirements for all classification regulations and procedures promulgated by the commissioner of correction.

Section 2.

Chapter 127 of the General Laws, as appearing in the 2000 Official Edition, is hereby amended by inserting after section *** the following section:—

Section *** . The commission of correction shall promulgate regulations and procedures for the classification of all persons committed to his custody and to the custody of the several sheriffs.

33 Section *** A. The classification regulations and procedures employed by the
34 commissioner of correction shall create an objective, validated, point-based classification
35 system.

36 Section *** B. The classification regulations and procedures employed by the
37 commissioner shall require that no more than fifteen percent of offenders be classified to
38 maximum security correctional facilities at any time, and that no less than thirty percent of
39 offenders be classified to minimum security, including pre-release or work-release correctional
40 facilities, at all times.

41 Section *** C. The classification regulations and procedures employed by the
42 commissioner shall ensure that no less than eighty percent of offenders progress to minimum
43 security or pre-release correctional facilities by the time they have completed eighty percent of
44 the minimum term of their sentence or aggregated sentences.

45 Section 3. The requirements of this section shall apply and control the movement of all
46 incarcerated sentenced offenders through the correctional facilities of the commonwealth
47 notwithstanding the provisions of any other previously enacted legislation.