

HOUSE No. 3036

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

In the Year Two Thousand Nine

An Act to designate shaken baby syndrome awareness week..

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 most recent National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System figures reveal
2 that almost 900,000 children were victims of abuse and neglect in the United States in 2005,
3 causing unspeakable pain and suffering to our most vulnerable citizens;

4 Whereas, Among the children who are victims of abuse and neglect, nearly four children
5 die in the United States each day;

6 Whereas, Abusive head trauma, including the trauma known as “Shaken Baby
7 Syndrome”, is recognized as the leading cause of death of physically abused children;

8 Whereas, Shaken Baby Syndrome can result in the loss of vision, brain damage,
9 paralysis, seizures, or death;

10 Whereas, A recent report in the Journal of the American Medical Association estimated
11 that, in the United States, an average of 300 children will die each year, and 600 to 1,200 more
12 will be injured, of whom two-thirds will be infants under 1 year in age, as a result of Shaken
13 Baby Syndrome, with many cases resulting in severe and permanent disabilities;

14 Whereas, Medical professionals believe that thousands of additional cases of Shaken
15 Baby Syndrome are being misdiagnosed or not detected;

16 Whereas, Shaken Baby Syndrome often results in permanent, irreparable brain damage or
17 death to an infant and many result in more than \$1,000,000 in medical costs to care for a single,
18 disabled child in just the few first years of life;

19 Whereas, The most effective solution for ending Shaken Baby Syndrome is to prevent the
20 abuse, and it is clear that the minimal costs of education and prevention programs may preclude
21 enormous medical and disability costs as well as immeasurable amounts of grief for families;

22 Whereas, Prevention programs have demonstrated that educating new parents about
23 injury prevention and the danger of shaking young children can bring about a significant
24 reduction in the number of cases of Shaken Baby Syndrome;

25 Whereas, Education programs have been shown to raise awareness and provide critically
26 important information about Shaken Baby Syndrome to parents, caregivers, daycare workers,
27 child protection employees, law enforcement personnel, health care professionals, and legal
28 representatives; and

29 Whereas, The deferred operation of this act would tend to defeat its purpose, which is to
30 provide forthwith for the annual observance of Shaken Baby Syndrome Awareness Week,

31 Therefore it is hereby declared to be an emergency law, necessary for the immediate
32 preservation of the public convenience.

33 SECTION 1. Chapter 6 of the General Laws, as appearing in the 2006 Official Edition, is
34 hereby amended by inserting after section 15CCCCC, the following section: -

35 SECTION 15 DDDDD. The Governor shall annually issue a proclamation setting apart
36 the third full week in April as “Shaken Baby Syndrome Awareness Week” in recognition of the
37 number children and families in the Commonwealth affected by Shaken Baby Syndrome and the
38 need for increased public awareness, research and support for victims and their families, and
39 recommending that the week be observed in an appropriate manner by the people.