

SENATE No. 1062

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PRESENTED BY:

Viriato M. deMacedo

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 ensuring the safety of sober houses.

PETITION OF:

NAME:

DISTRICT/ADDRESS:

Viriato M. deMacedo

Plymouth and Barnstable

Thomas J. Calter

12th Plymouth

SENATE No. 1062

By Mr. deMacedo, a petition (accompanied by bill, Senate, No. 1062) of Viriato M. deMacedo and Thomas J. Calter for legislation to ensure the safety of sober houses. Municipalities and Regional Government.

[SIMILAR MATTER FILED IN PREVIOUS SESSION
SEE HOUSE, NO. 1828 OF 2013-2014.]

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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

An Act relative to ensuring the safety of sober houses.

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. Chapter 40A of the General Laws, as appearing in the 2012 Official
2 Edition, is hereby amended by inserting, after section 9C, the following section:—

3 Section 9D. (a) As used in this section, the term “sober house” shall mean a dwelling unit
4 occupied by more than 4 unrelated persons, all of whom are in recovery from chemical
5 dependency and considered handicapped under 42 U.S.C. 3601, et seq., that provides a non-
6 institutional residential setting in which residents voluntarily are subject to written rules and
7 regulations regarding recovery from chemical dependency, including the prohibition of alcohol
8 and illegal drug use and a required minimum of 10 hours of group therapy per month. A sober
9 house shall not include government subsidized facilities or group residences licensed or
10 regulated by the commonwealth under section 71 of chapter 111.

(b) A city or town may adopt zoning ordinances, by-laws for special permits or by-laws for an environmental license for sober houses authorizing the establishment and operation of sober houses upon the request of a reasonable accommodation pursuant to 42 U.S.C 3601 et. seq. to provide an exception to sections 22 to 31, inclusive, of chapter 140, which environmental license shall be granted if the following standards and conditions are met by the operator of such sober house:

(1) the operator shall submit a written request for an environmental license to the permit granting authority of the city or town on a form provided by the municipality and states the number of residents to resided in the sober house and specifies the maximum number of residents as allowed by the square footage of living area that meets the requirements set forth below.

SECTION 2. The department of Public Health shall, six months following the passage of this act, promulgate rules and regulations relative to sober homes, as defined in section 9D of chapter 40A. The rules and regulations shall address, at minimum, the following:

(a) the requisite that all sober homes include complete living accommodations and bedroom space that allows for individual privacy and activities;

(b) standards for bedroom size and occupancy;

(c) the requisite that all sober homes prepare, file, and distribute among sober home residents a written safety plan assuring the safety of individuals in the event of a disaster, such as fire, flood, loss of heat or electricity, or any other circumstances requiring evacuation or resettlement;

(d) the requisite that all sober homes conduct fire drills at a frequency determined by the department; and

(e) the requisite that all sober homes develop and file a parking plan for motor vehicles.

SECTION 3. Section 26H of chapter 148 of the General Laws, as so appearing, is hereby amended by inserting after the word “commonwealth” in line 16, the following:—

; excluding sober houses, as defined in section 9D of chapter 40A.

SECTION 4. Section 26H of chapter 148 of the General Laws, as so appearing, is hereby amended by inserting after the third paragraph, the following new paragraph:—

Any lodging or boarding house subject to the provisions of this section shall present, in writing, to the local city or town fire department a notice of an intention to occupy to the local city or town, no less than 30 days before taking occupancy of the premises. Failure to present notice to the local city or town will result in a \$10 per day cumulative fine payable to the city or town and shall authorize the local fire department to immediately inspect the premises and terminate occupancy. If following a fire in any lodging or boarding house subject to the provisions of this section, it is discovered they have failed to present notice of occupancy to the local city or town, the owners of the lodging or boarding house may be subject to criminal prosecution.