

SENATE No. 1254

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PRESENTED BY:

James B. Eldridge

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 resolve:

Resolve establishing a special commission on prisoner and correctional officer suicides.

PETITION OF:

NAME:	DISTRICT/ADDRESS:
<i>James B. Eldridge</i>	<i>Middlesex and Worcester</i>
<i>Jennifer E. Benson</i>	<i>37th Middlesex</i>
<i>Sean Garballey</i>	<i>23rd Middlesex</i>
<i>Jason M. Lewis</i>	<i>Fifth Middlesex</i>
<i>Gloria L. Fox</i>	<i>7th Suffolk</i>

SENATE No. 1254

By Mr. Eldridge, a petition (accompanied by resolve, Senate, No. 1254) of James B. Eldridge, Jennifer E. Benson, Sean Garballey, Jason M. Lewis and others for legislation to establish a special commission on inmate and prisoner suicides. Public Safety and Homeland Security.

[SIMILAR MATTER FILED IN PREVIOUS SESSION
SEE SENATE, NO. 1134 OF 2013-2014.]

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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

Resolve establishing a special commission on prisoner and correctional officer suicides.

1 **Resolved**, SECTION 1. There shall be a special commission to study the prevention of
2 suicide amongst prisoners and correctional officers in Massachusetts correctional facilities. The
3 commission shall consist of the secretary of the executive office of public safety or the
4 secretary’s designee who shall serve as chair; the commissioner of the department of correction
5 or the commissioner’s designee; the commissioner of the department of mental health or the
6 commissioner’s designee; one person to be appointed by the president of the senate; one person
7 to be appointed by the speaker of the house of representatives; five persons to be appointed by
8 the governor, one of whom shall be a representative of a legal advocacy organization that has
9 expertise with issues related to prisons and prisoners, one of whom shall be a representative of a
10 community organization or public agency that works with prisoners and their families, one of
11 whom shall be a representative of an organization that specializes in suicide prevention, one of
12 whom shall be a representative of an organization that represents Massachusetts corrections

13 officers, and one of whom shall be a representative of an organization that represents
14 Massachusetts sheriffs. Each member shall serve without compensation.

15 The commission shall review the state of suicide prevention programs in Massachusetts'
16 correctional facilities and develop model plans, recommend program changes, highlight budget
17 priorities and recommend best practices that could be utilized to reduce instances of prisoner and
18 correctional officer suicide, and attempted suicide. The commission shall: (1) examine and
19 evaluate the state of jail and prison suicide prevention policies in the commonwealth; (2)
20 examine and evaluate suicide prevention training for correctional facility staff personnel in the
21 commonwealth; (3) develop recommendations on ways in which correctional facilities can
22 improve intake screening and bookkeeping; (4) examine and develop recommendations on
23 methods by which correctional facilities may improve identification, referral, and evaluation of
24 individual suicide risk; (5) provide recommendations for improving communication between
25 detention facility staff and arresting and/or transporting officers, as well as between detention
26 facility staff and potentially suicidal inmates; (6) examine and develop recommendations on
27 methods by which correctional facilities may improve housing designated for inmates identified
28 as suicidal; (7) provide recommendations for improving observation and treatment plans for
29 inmates identified as suicidal; (8) provide recommendations for improving suicide intervention;
30 and (9) examine and develop recommendations for how correctional facilities may improve or
31 establish practices of postmortem notification, reporting, and mortality-morbidity reviewing. (10)
32 develop recommendations for the provision of mental health counseling services to corrections
33 officers that have a need for such services. (11) examine ways in which correctional facilities can
34 reduce stress, anxiety, and depression among corrections officers. (12) examine training

35 programs for incoming corrections officers and develop recommendations for programs to
36 include a discussion of mental preparedness.

37 The commission may hold public hearings to assist in the collection and evaluation of
38 data and testimony.

39 The commission shall submit its findings and recommendations relative to suicide
40 prevention, together with drafts of legislation necessary to carry those recommendations into
41 effect, by filing the same with the clerks of the house of representatives and senate, the house
42 and senate committees on ways and means, the joint committee on public safety and homeland
43 security, and the joint committee on mental health and substance abuse not later than March 31,
44 2017.