

SENATE No. 2143

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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

SENATE, Thursday, February 25, 2016

The committee on Ways and Means, to whom was referred the House Bill eliminating racial and ethnic health disparities in the Commonwealth (House, No. 3969, amended); reports, recommending that the same ought to pass with an amendment striking out all after the enacting clause and inserting in place thereof the text of Senate document numbered 2143; by striking out the title and inserting in place thereof the following title:- “An Act eliminating health disparities”.

For the committee,
Karen E. Spilka

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1 SECTION 1. Section 16 of chapter 6A of the General Laws, as appearing in the 2014
2 Official Edition, is hereby amended by striking out, in line 38, the words “and (7)” and inserting
3 in place thereof the following words:- (7) the office of health equity; and (8).

4 SECTION 2. Subsection (a) of section 16O of said chapter 6A, as so appearing, is hereby
5 amended by striking out the second sentence and inserting in place thereof the following
6 sentence:- The council shall make recommendations to the director of the office of health equity
7 to reduce and eliminate disparities in access to quality health care and health outcomes based on
8 race, ethnicity, gender and disability status.

9 SECTION 3. Said section 16O of said chapter 6A, as so appearing, is hereby further
10 amended by inserting after the word “officio”, in line 27, the following words:- ; the director of
11 the office of health equity or a designee.

12 SECTION 4. Said chapter 6A is hereby further amended by adding the following
13 section:-

14 Section 16Z. (a) As used in this section the following words shall have the following
15 meanings unless the context clearly requires otherwise:

16 “Health disparities”, differences in the incidence, prevalence, mortality and burden of
17 diseases and other adverse health conditions, differences in the access to or receipt of health care
18 or both such differences that disproportionately affect individuals based on race, ethnicity,
19 gender and disability status.

20 “Office”, the office of health equity.

21 (b) There shall be an office of health equity within the executive office of health and
22 human services. The office shall be in the charge of a director, who shall report directly to the
23 secretary of health and human services. The health disparities council, established in section
24 16O, shall serve as an advisory board to the office of health equity.

25 (c) The office, subject to appropriation, shall coordinate all activities of the
26 commonwealth to eliminate health disparities. The office shall set goals for the reduction of
27 health disparities and prepare an annual plan to eliminate health disparities.

28 (d) The office, subject to appropriation, shall collaborate with other state agencies on
29 health disparities reduction initiatives to address the social and economic factors that influence
30 health inequality. The office shall also consider and make recommendations regarding
31 individuals that experience the highest levels of disparity in health and health care based on race,
32 ethnicity, gender and disability status. The state agencies shall include, but not be limited to, the
33 executive office of health and human services, the executive office of housing and economic
34 development, the executive office of public safety and security, the executive office of energy
35 and environmental affairs, the Massachusetts Department of Transportation, the executive office
36 of labor and workforce development and the executive office of education. The office shall
37 facilitate communication and partnership between state agencies to develop a greater

38 understanding of the intersection between agency activities and health outcomes. The office shall
39 facilitate the development of interagency initiatives to address the social and economic
40 determinants of health and health disparity issues including, but not limited to: (i) healthcare
41 access and quality; (ii) housing availability and quality; (iii) transportation availability, location
42 and cost; (iv) community policing and safe spaces; (v) air, water and land usage and quality; (vi)
43 employment and workforce development; and (vii) education access and quality.

44 (e) The office, subject to appropriation, shall evaluate the effectiveness of programs and
45 interventions to eliminate health disparities and identify best practices and model programs.

46 (f) The office, subject to appropriation, shall prepare an annual health disparity report
47 card. The report card shall evaluate the progress of the commonwealth toward eliminating health
48 disparities and, whenever possible, use quantifiable measures and comparative benchmarks. The
49 report card shall report on progress on a state and regional basis, based on regions determined by
50 the office. The office shall hold public hearings in each determined region to receive public
51 information on the topics of the report card. Not later than July 1 of each year, the report card
52 shall be delivered to the governor and the members of the health disparities council, established
53 under section 16O, posted on the website of the office and filed with the clerks of the senate and
54 house of representatives.

55 SECTION 5. Subsection (g) of section 8 of chapter 6D of the General Laws, as appearing
56 in the 2014 Official Edition, is hereby amended by inserting after the second sentence the
57 following sentence:- The commission shall establish goals that are intended to reduce health care
58 disparities based on race, ethnicity, gender and disability status and shall seek to incorporate the

59 recommendations of the health disparities council and the office of health equity created in
60 section 16Z of chapter 6A.