

SENATE No. 954

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PRESENTED BY:

Michael J. Barrett

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 providing fair chances for employment.

PETITION OF:

NAME:	DISTRICT/ADDRESS:
<i>Michael J. Barrett</i>	<i>Third Middlesex</i>
<i>Mary S. Keefe</i>	<i>15th Worcester</i>
<i>Jose F. Tosado</i>	<i>9th Hampden</i>
<i>David M. Rogers</i>	<i>24th Middlesex</i>
<i>James B. Eldridge</i>	<i>Middlesex and Worcester</i>
<i>Patricia D. Jehlen</i>	<i>Second Middlesex</i>
<i>Kenneth I. Gordon</i>	<i>21st Middlesex</i>
<i>Paul R. Heroux</i>	<i>2nd Bristol</i>
<i>John J. Mahoney</i>	<i>13th Worcester</i>
<i>Elizabeth A. Malia</i>	<i>11th Suffolk</i>
<i>Kay Khan</i>	<i>11th Middlesex</i>

SENATE No. 954

By Mr. Barrett, a petition (accompanied by bill, Senate, No. 954) of Michael J. Barrett, Mary S. Keefe, Jose F. Tosado, David M. Rogers and other members of the General Court for legislation to provide fair chances for employment. Labor and Workforce Development.

[SIMILAR MATTER FILED IN PREVIOUS SESSION
SEE SENATE, NO. 843 OF 2013-2014.]

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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

An Act providing fair chances for employment.

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. Denial of employment opportunities to individuals because they are or have
2 been unemployed has the intent or necessary effect of burdening local economies and commerce
3 by reducing job opportunities and diminishing earnings and incomes, thereby: Reducing personal
4 consumption and undermining economic stability and growth;

5 Squandering human capital essential to the state's economic vibrancy and growth;

6 Increasing demands for state and federal unemployment insurance benefits, reducing trust
7 fund assets and leading to higher payroll taxes for employers, cuts in benefits for jobless
8 workers, or both;

9 Imposing additional burdens on publicly funded health and welfare programs; and

Depressing income, property and other tax revenues that states and localities rely on to support operations and institutions essential to building and maintaining a robust economy.

The purpose of this legislation is to eliminate the burdens imposed on the state's economy and on families and workers in the state when individuals are excluded from job opportunities because of their current unemployment status, and to prohibit consideration of current employment status in screening for or filling positions.

SECTION 2. Chapter 149 of the General Laws is hereby amended by inserting at the end thereof the following new section:-

Section 192. (a) As used in this section, the term

“Affected individual,” means any person who was refused consideration for employment or was not hired by an employer because of the person's current employment status, or any person who was not recruited, screened, considered or referred for employment opportunities by an employment agency because of the person's current employment status.

“Contractor,” means any person that is a party to a government contract other than the government. The term contractor means the department, division, subcontractor or other unit of a person responsible for the performance under the contract.

“Contracting officer,” means an individual who, by appointment in accordance with applicable regulations, has the authority to make and administer contracts and to make determinations and findings with respect to contracts, or the authorized representative of the contracting officer acting within the limits of the representative's authority.

“Current employment status,” means that an individual is currently employed.

31 “Current unemployment status,” means that an individual is currently unemployed.

32 “Employment agency,” means any person regularly undertaking with compensation and
33 for profit, to procure employees for an employer or to procure for individuals opportunities to
34 work for an employer and includes an agent of such a person.

35 “Online job website,” means any Internet-based website that provides online job
36 postings, regardless of how they are acquired.

37 “Person,” means an individual, partnership, association, corporation, business trust, legal
38 representative, or any organized group of persons.

39 (b) It shall be an unlawful practice for an employer to:

40 (1) Fail to offer employment to, or refuse to consider for employment, an individual
41 because of the individual’s current unemployment status;

42 (2) Publish, in print, on the Internet or in any other medium, an advertisement or
43 announcement for any job that includes:

44 (i) Any provision stating or indicating that current employment status is a requirement or
45 qualification for a job; or

46 (ii) Any provision stating or indicating that an employer will not consider an applicant for
47 employment based on the person’s current unemployment status;

48 (3) Direct or request that an employment agency take current employment status into
49 account in screening or referring applicants for employment.

50 (c) It shall be an unlawful practice for an employment agency to:

(1) Fail or refuse to consider or refer an individual for employment based on the individual's current unemployment status;

(2) Limit, segregate or classify individuals in any manner that may limit their access to information about jobs or referral for consideration of jobs because of their current unemployment status;

(3) Publish, in print, on the Internet or in any other medium, an advertisement or announcement for any job vacancy that includes:

(i) Any provision stating or indicating that current employment status is a requirement or qualification for a job; or

(ii) Any provision stating or indicating that an employer will not consider individuals for employment based on current unemployment status.

(d) It shall be an unlawful employment practice for an online job website to publish any advertisement or announcement for any job vacancy that includes:

(1) Any provision stating or indicating that current employment status is a requirement or qualification for a job; or

(2) Any provision stating or indicating that an employer will not consider individuals for employment based on current unemployment status.

(e) It shall be unlawful for any employer or employment agency to:

(1) Interfere with, restrain, or deny the exercise of or the attempt to exercise, any right provided under this section; or

(2) To refuse to hire, to discharge, or in any other manner to discriminate against any individual for opposing any practice made unlawful by this section.

(f) It shall be unlawful for any person to discharge or in any other manner discriminate against any individual because such individual:

(1) Has filed any charge, or has instituted or caused to be instituted any proceeding, under or related to this section;

(2) Has given, or is about to give, any information in connection with any inquiry or proceeding relating to any right provided under this section; or

(3) Has testified, or is about to testify, in any inquiry or proceeding relating to any right provided under this section.

(g) Nothing in this section is intended to preclude an employer or employment agency from considering an individual's employment history, or from examining the reasons underlying an individual's employment status, in assessing an individual's ability to perform a job or otherwise making employment decisions about that individual.

(h) To ensure compliance with the provisions of this title or any regulation or order issued under this title, the attorney general shall have the investigative authority to enter employer workplaces and examine all employer records related to allegations of violations of subsections (b) through (d), inclusive. Any employer or employment agency shall make, keep, and preserve records pertaining to compliance with this section.

(i) Any employer or employment agency that violates subsection (b) or (c) shall be liable to any affected individual:

(1) For actual damages equal --

(i) The amount of

(A) Any wages, salary, employment benefits, or other compensation denied or lost to such individual by reason of the violation; or

(B) In a case in which wages, salary, employment benefits, or other compensation have not been denied or lost to the individual, any actual monetary losses sustained by the individual as a direct result of the violation or damages in the amount of \$1000 per violation per day, whichever is greater; and

(ii) The interest on the amount described in clause (i)(A) calculated at the prevailing rate; and

(iii) An additional amount as liquidated damages equal to the sum of the amount of compensation and interest described in subparagraphs (i) and (ii), except that if an employer or employment agency that has violated subsection (b) or (c) proves to the satisfaction of the court that the act or omission that violated subsection (b) or (c) was in good faith and that the employer had reasonable grounds for believing that the act or omission was not a violation of subsection (b) or (c), the court may, in its discretion, reduce the amount of the liability to the amount and interest determined under subparagraphs (i) and (ii); and

(2) For such equitable relief as may be appropriate, including employment and compensatory and punitive damages.

An action to recover the damages or equitable relief prescribed in this subsection may be maintained against any employer or employment agency in any state court of competent

113 jurisdiction by any one or more persons for and in behalf of the affected individual, or the
114 affected individual and other individuals similarly situated.

115 The court in such an action shall, in addition to any judgment awarded to the plaintiff,
116 allow a reasonable attorney's fee, reasonable expert witness fees, and other costs of the action to
117 be paid by the defendant.

118 The right provided by this subsection to bring an action by or on behalf of any affected
119 individual shall terminate on the filing of a complaint by the attorney general in an action under
120 subsection (j).

121 (j) The attorney general shall receive, investigate, and attempt to resolve complaints of
122 violations of subsections (b) through (f), inclusive. The attorney general may bring an action in
123 any state court of competent jurisdiction:

124 (1) To enjoin violations of this title and seek other relief going forward necessary to
125 prevent future violations;

126 (2) To recover the damages described in subsection (i);

127 (3) In the case of a violation of subsections (d) through (f), inclusive, a civil penalty of
128 not less than \$250 per violation; or

129 (4) Any other equitable relief the Court deems appropriate.

130 Any sums recovered by the attorney general shall be held in a special deposit account and
131 shall be paid directly to each affected individual.

132 (k) An action under subsection (i) or (j) may be brought not later than 3 years after the
133 date of the last event constituting the alleged violation for which the action is brought, provided
134 that the limitations for filing an action shall be tolled during the period that the attorney general
135 is considering a complaint against any defendant named in a complaint filed with under
136 subsection (j).

137 (l) Payment under a contract awarded by the state, may be terminated and the contractor
138 who made the contract with the state agency may be debarred in accordance with the
139 requirements of section 29F of chapter 29, governing government contracts, if the contractor is
140 found by a court of competent jurisdiction to have engaged in the any of the prohibited acts
141 enumerated in this section.