

HOUSE No. 1512

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PRESENTED BY:

Joan Meschino

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 to eliminate disparate impact.

PETITION OF:

NAME:	DISTRICT/ADDRESS:
<i>Joan Meschino</i>	<i>3rd Plymouth</i>
<i>Michelle M. DuBois</i>	<i>10th Plymouth</i>
<i>Carmine Lawrence Gentile</i>	<i>13th Middlesex</i>
<i>Tami L. Gouveia</i>	<i>14th Middlesex</i>
<i>James K. Hawkins</i>	<i>2nd Bristol</i>
<i>Stephan Hay</i>	<i>3rd Worcester</i>
<i>Mary S. Keefe</i>	<i>15th Worcester</i>
<i>Tram T. Nguyen</i>	<i>18th Essex</i>
<i>Patrick M. O'Connor</i>	<i>Plymouth and Norfolk</i>
<i>Denise Provost</i>	<i>27th Middlesex</i>
<i>David M. Rogers</i>	<i>24th Middlesex</i>
<i>Thomas M. Stanley</i>	<i>9th Middlesex</i>
<i>José F. Tosado</i>	<i>9th Hampden</i>

HOUSE No. 1512

By Ms. Meschino of Hull, a petition (accompanied by bill, House, No. 1512) of Joan Meschino and others relative to the enforcement of certain civil rights laws. The Judiciary.

[SIMILAR MATTER FILED IN PREVIOUS SESSION
SEE HOUSE, NO. 951 OF 2017-2018.]

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

**In the One Hundred and Ninety-First General Court
(2019-2020)**

An Act to eliminate disparate impact.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:

1 Chapter 12 of the General Laws, as appearing in the 2016 Official Edition, is hereby
2 amended by inserting after Section 11N the following section:-

3 Section 11O. (a) No unit of State, county, or local government shall:-

4 (1) exclude a person from participation in, deny a person the benefits of, or otherwise
5 subject a person to discrimination in any program or activity on the grounds of that person’s
6 race, color, national origin, or sex; or

7 (2) utilize criteria or methods of administration that have the effect of excluding persons
8 from participation in, denying persons the benefits of, or otherwise subjecting persons to
9 discrimination in any program or activity because of their race, color, national origin, or sex.

10 (b) Any person aggrieved by conduct that violates subsection (a) may bring a civil
11 lawsuit, in a State court, against the offending unit of government. This lawsuit must be brought
12 not later than 3 years after the violation of subsection (a). A violation of this section is
13 established if, based on the totality of the circumstances, it is shown that any individual has been
14 denied any of the rights protected by subsection (a). If the court finds that a violation of
15 paragraph (1) of subsection (a) has occurred, the court may award to the plaintiff actual and
16 punitive damages and if the court finds that a violation of paragraph (2) of subsection (a) has
17 occurred, the court may award to the plaintiff actual damages. The court, as it deems appropriate,
18 may grant as relief any permanent or preliminary injunction, temporary restraining order, or
19 other order.

20 (c) Upon motion, a court shall award reasonable attorneys' fees and costs, including
21 expert witness fees and other litigation expenses, to a plaintiff who is a prevailing party in any
22 action brought:—

23 (1) pursuant to subsection (b); or (2) to enforce a right arising under the Massachusetts
24 Constitution.

25 In awarding reasonable attorneys' fees, the court shall consider the degree to which the
26 relief obtained relates to the relief sought.

27 (d) For the purpose of this Act, the term "prevailing party" includes any party:—

28 (1) who obtains some of his or her requested relief through a judicial judgment in his or
29 her favor;

30 (2) who obtains some of his or her requested relief through any settlement agreement
31 approved by the court; or

32 (3) whose pursuit of a non-frivolous claim was a catalyst for a unilateral change in
33 position by the unit of State, county, or local government relative to the relief sought.

34 (e) Nothing in this section shall be intended to require a plaintiff seeking to enforce the
35 protection afforded herein to exhaust any administrative remedies applicable to discrimination
36 actions under other laws.