

HOUSE No. 2677

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PRESENTED BY:

Antonio F. D. Cabral

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 the Open Meeting Law.

PETITION OF:

| NAME: | DISTRICT/ADDRESS: | DATE ADDED: |
|-----------------------------|---------------------|------------------|
| <i>Antonio F. D. Cabral</i> | <i>13th Bristol</i> | <i>1/10/2019</i> |
| <i>James K. Hawkins</i> | <i>2nd Bristol</i> | <i>2/1/2019</i> |

HOUSE No. 2677

By Mr. Cabral of New Bedford, a petition (accompanied by bill, House, No. 2677) of Antonio F. D. Cabral and James K. Hawkins relative to violations of the open meeting law. State Administration and Regulatory Oversight.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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

An Act relative to the Open Meeting Law.

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. Amendment to Section 18. Section 18 of chapter 30A of the General
2 Laws, as appearing in the 2016 Official Edition, is hereby amended by striking out, in lines 16-
3 17, the words:-

4 “‘Intentional Violation’, an act or omission by a public body, or member thereof, in
5 knowing violation of the open meeting law.”

6 SECTION 2. Amendments to Section 23.

7 (a) Subsection (c) of section 23 of said chapter, as so appearing, is hereby amended
8 by striking out, in lines 23-26, the words:-

9 “Following a determination that a violation has occurred, the attorney general shall
10 determine whether the public body, 1 or more of the members, or both, are responsible and
11 whether the violation was intentional or unintentional.”.

12 (b) Paragraph (7) of said section, as so appearing, is hereby amended by striking out
13 paragraph (7) and inserting in place thereof the following paragraphs:-

14 “(7) reprimanding a member or members of a public body, said reprimand to be a public
15 record; or

16 (8) prescribe other appropriate action.”.

17 (c) Subsection (f) of said section, as so appearing, is hereby amended by inserting
18 after the last paragraph the following paragraphs:-

19 “Such order of notice may invalidate any action taken at any meeting at which any
20 provision of this section has been violated; provided that such complaint is filed within 21 days
21 of the date when such action is made public.

22 Any such order of notice may also, when appropriate, require the records of any such
23 meeting to be made public, unless it shall have been determined by such justice that the
24 maintenance of secrecy with respect to such records is authorized. The remedy created hereby is
25 not exclusive, but shall be in addition to every other available remedy. Such order may also
26 include reinstatement without loss of compensation, seniority, tenure or other benefits for any
27 employee discharged at a meeting or hearing held in violation of the provisions of this section. In
28 an action brought by 3 or more registered voters, such order of notice may also require the public
29 body to reimburse said voters reasonable attorney’s fees and court costs.

30 Such order of notice may also include a civil fine against the public body in an amount no
31 greater than \$1,000 for each meeting held in violation of this section and may also include a civil
32 fine of not more than \$200 for each violation against any individual member of a public body

33 who has already been fined pursuant to this section or received a reprimand pursuant to section
34 23(c)(7). A fine shall not be imposed against any member of the public body who is recorded in
35 opposition to the act that is found to be in violation of the open meeting law. A penalty against
36 an individual member shall not be reimbursable with public funds.”.

37 (d) Subsection (g) of said section is hereby amended by inserting after the word
38 “body”, in line 87, the following words:-

39 “, or any member thereof,”.