The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PRESENTED BY:

Diana DiZoglio

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 COVID-19 emergency financial relief for veterans.

PETITION OF:

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<tr>
<th>NAME:</th>
<th>DISTRICT/ADDRESS:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Diana DiZoglio</td>
<td>First Essex</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ryan C. Fattman</td>
<td>Worcester and Norfolk</td>
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<tr>
<td>Patrick M. O'Connor</td>
<td>Plymouth and Norfolk</td>
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<tr>
<td>Marcos A. Devers</td>
<td>16th Essex</td>
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<tr>
<td>Christopher Hendricks</td>
<td>11th Bristol</td>
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<td>Mike Connolly</td>
<td>26th Middlesex</td>
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<td>Michael O. Moore</td>
<td>Second Worcester</td>
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<td>John H. Rogers</td>
<td>12th Norfolk</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nika C. Elugardo</td>
<td>15th Suffolk</td>
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<td>Michelle M. DuBois</td>
<td>10th Plymouth</td>
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6/24/2020
An Act providing COVID-19 emergency financial relief for veterans.

Whereas, The deferred operation of this act would tend to defeat its purpose, which is to provide emergency financial relief for veterans who have suffered a financial loss due to COVID-19, therefore it is hereby declared to be an emergency law, necessary for the immediate preservation of the public safety, health and convenience.

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

SECTION 1: DEFINITIONS

Section 1. The following words as used in this Act, unless the context otherwise requires, shall have the following meanings:

“COVID-19”, the 2019 Novel Coronavirus or 2019-nCoV.

“Eligible applicant”, an individual who: (a) qualifies as a veteran under clause 43 of section 7 of chapter 4 of the General Laws, or is the surviving spouse (who has not remarried) of a deceased veteran; (b) is a resident of the Commonwealth, and (c) has suffered a financial loss due to COVID-19.
“Financial loss”, a reduction or severance of a household’s earned or unearned income.

“Secretary”, the Secretary of the Department of Veterans’ Services.

SECTION 2: RELIEF GRANTS

Section 2. (a) Notwithstanding any general or special law to the contrary and in addition to any other public funds, the Secretary is empowered to the extent and in such amounts as provided through appropriation to provide one-time emergency financial relief grants to eligible applicants in need of assistance as a result of COVID-19.

(b) Eligible applicants must be able to demonstrate a financial loss on or after the date of the emergency declaration issued by the Governor dated March 10, 2020, and designated as Executive Order Number 591, related to one of the following situations: (1) the eligible applicant or a legal dependent of the eligible applicant has/had a confirmed case of COVID-19; (2) a healthcare provider has determined that the presence of the eligible applicant or the eligible applicant’s spouse in the workplace would jeopardize the health of the eligible applicant or the eligible applicant’s spouse or others due to likely exposure to COVID-19; (3) a healthcare provider has determined that the health of the eligible applicant or the eligible applicant’s spouse is jeopardized due to a diagnosed underlying health condition which would put the eligible applicant or the eligible applicant’s spouse at increased risk if exposed to COVID-19 in the workplace; (4) the employer of the eligible applicant or the eligible applicant’s spouse directs them not to report to work for COVID-19 related reasons; (5) the workplace of the eligible applicant or the eligible applicant’s spouse is closed for COVID-19-related reasons and they are excused from work duties because they cannot be reassigned or work remotely; or (6) the
eligible applicant is financially impacted by a school or childcare provider closure due to COVID-19.

(c) Eligible applicants may use the financial assistance authorized under this section to purchase groceries, health care supplies or other necessities, delivery services for the foregoing, for emergency financial relief, hospitalization assistance, medical care or treatment, or any other COVID-19-related assistance as determined by the Secretary.

(d) Eligibility for the financial assistance or the level of financial assistance provided under this section shall not be limited because the eligible applicant has previously received unemployment benefits or assistance from other public funds.

SECTION 3. APPROPRIATION

Section 3. (a) There shall be established a separate fund to be known as the COVID-19 Relief for Veterans Fund, to be administered by the Secretary for the purposes of carrying out this Act. The Secretary may accept gifts, donations, grants or bequests or any federal funds for any of the purposes set forth in this section, which shall be credited to the fund.

(b) On the effective date of this Act, the Comptroller shall transfer $10,000,000 from the General Fund to the fund established in subsection (a) for the purposes of carrying out this Act.

(c) The amount appropriated under this section shall be available until June 30, 2021.

SECTION 4: REGULATIONS

Section 4. The Secretary is hereby authorized to promulgate guidance and regulations to assure the timely and effective implementation of this Act.
Section 5. This Act shall take effect upon its passage.