

**HOUSE . . . . . No. 3778**

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**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 establishing a special commission to end family, child, and individual homelessness.

PETITION OF:

NAME:	DISTRICT/ADDRESS:	DATE ADDED:
<i>Joan Meschino</i>	<i>3rd Plymouth</i>	<i>2/18/2021</i>

**HOUSE . . . . . No. 3778**

By Ms. Meschino of Hull, a petition (accompanied by bill, House, No. 3778) of Joan Meschino for an investigation by a special commission (including members of the General Court) relative to ending family, child, and individual homelessness. Children, Families and Persons with Disabilities.

**The Commonwealth of Massachusetts**

**In the One Hundred and Ninety-Second General Court  
(2021-2022)**

An Act establishing a special commission to end family, child, and individual homelessness.

*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. The General Court hereby finds and declares that:

2 (1) there is a crisis of family, child and individual homelessness in Massachusetts;

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4 (2) there is a great need to understand the scope, magnitude, costs and impact of family  
5 and individual homelessness, particularly the educational and health impacts on homeless  
6 children;

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8 (3) there are many root causes of family and individual homelessness, including, but not  
9 limited to, poverty, domestic violence, community violence, substance use disorders and mental  
10 health issues;

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12 (4) although the commonwealth currently provides for emergency housing assistance  
13 programs for families and provides many resources available to homeless families while in  
14 shelter, these resources are neither designed, nor enough to end this statewide crisis;

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16 (5) although the commonwealth oversees the funds for individual shelters through the  
17 department of housing and community development and provides many of the resources  
18 available to individuals while in shelter, these resources are neither designed, nor enough to end  
19 this statewide crisis;

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21 (6) it is paramount that the commonwealth ascertains the costs incurred by insufficient  
22 and uncoordinated resources available for homeless families and individuals; and

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24 (7) family and individual homelessness is solvable and preventable with a concrete,  
25 actionable plan that coordinates all necessary resources to end family homelessness in the  
26 commonwealth.

27 SECTION 2. (a) There shall be established a special commission on family, child and  
28 individual homelessness pursuant to section 2A of chapter 4 of the General Laws to develop an  
29 actionable and measurable plan to end family, child and individual homelessness in the  
30 commonwealth. The commission shall: (1) identify the current gaps in resources and the  
31 necessary steps to fill those gaps; (2) discern the impact of the lack of stable housing for

32 homeless and housing insecure children; (3) conduct a cost analysis of family, children and  
33 individual homelessness currently and a cost analysis of providing the necessary resources to end  
34 homelessness; and (4) generate a thorough plan that would unite local, state and federal  
35 resources into a coordinated effort that will lead to the end of homelessness. The commission  
36 shall utilize an equity framework prioritizing protected characteristics, including, but not limited  
37 to, gender, race, and disability, and a trauma informed care approach in satisfying these  
38 objectives.

39 (b) The commission shall consist of the following 31 members: the governor or a  
40 designee from the governor's staff, who shall serve as chair; the chief justice of the housing court  
41 or their designee; the chief justice of the juvenile court or their designee; the secretary of the  
42 executive office of health and human services or their designee; the undersecretary of the  
43 department of housing and community development or their designee; the commissioner of the  
44 department of elementary and secondary education or their designee; the commissioner of the  
45 department of mental health or their designee; the commissioner of the department of  
46 developmental services or their designee; the commissioner of the department of transitional  
47 assistance or their designee; the commissioner of the department of children and families or their  
48 designee; the commissioner of the department of early education and care or their designee; the  
49 secretary of elder affairs or their designee; the commissioner of the Massachusetts rehabilitation  
50 commission or their designee; the commissioner of the department of public health or their  
51 designee; 3 members appointed by the Massachusetts Municipal Association, one representing  
52 an urban, one representing a suburban, and one representing a rural municipality; 2 members of  
53 the house of representatives to be appointed by the speaker of the house; 2 members of the senate  
54 to be appointed by the senate president; and 10 members to be appointed by the governor, 2 of

55 whom shall be individuals that have prior lived experience with family homelessness or housing  
56 insecurity, 2 of whom shall be individuals that have prior lived experience with individual  
57 homelessness or housing insecurity, 1 of whom shall be the chief executive officer of an  
58 organization that advocates for family homelessness, 1 of whom shall be the chief executive  
59 officer of an organization that advocates for individual homelessness, 1 of whom shall be the  
60 chief executive officer of an organization that advocates for child homelessness, 1 of whom shall  
61 be the director or an organization that provides shelter for families experiencing homelessness, 1  
62 of whom shall be the director or an organization that provides shelter for individuals  
63 experiencing homelessness and 1 of whom shall be the director or an organization that provides  
64 shelter for children experiencing homelessness.

65 (c) The commission shall consult, as necessary, with officials from the Massachusetts  
66 rehabilitation commission, the department of corrections, the department of probation and the  
67 department of youth services.

68 (d) The commission may elect to form subcommittees on various specific issues within  
69 the scope of the commission. Any subcommittees formed by the commission shall meet not less  
70 than monthly.

71 (e) (i) The commission shall meet not less than monthly for the first year following the  
72 passage of this act.

73 (ii) The commission may hold additional meetings to address specific issues as they  
74 relate to the work of the commission.

75 (iii) The committee shall file bi-annual progress reports with the governor and the clerks  
76 of the house of representatives and the senate.

77 (iv) The commission shall, not later than 1 year after the passage of this act, file its first  
78 report, together with any recommendations and drafts of recommended legislation, with the  
79 governor and clerks of the house of representatives and the senate.

80 (v) Not later than 5 years after the passage of this act, the commission shall file a  
81 comprehensive, actionable plan to end homelessness in the commonwealth with the governor  
82 and clerks of the house of representatives and the senate. The plan shall incorporate, as  
83 appropriate, components various housing and support models such as housing first, permanent  
84 supportive housing, wrap around services and the convention of the rights of the child.