

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

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**The Commonwealth of Massachusetts**

PRESENTED BY:

***Jamie Zahlaway Belsito***

*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 peer support services.**

PETITION OF:

| NAME:                         | DISTRICT/ADDRESS: | DATE ADDED:      |
|-------------------------------|-------------------|------------------|
| <i>Jamie Zahlaway Belsito</i> | <i>4th Essex</i>  | <i>4/11/2022</i> |

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

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By Ms. Belsito of Topsfield, a petition (subject to Joint Rule 12) of Jamie Zahlaway Belsito that the Department of Mental Health be authorized to establish a program of peer support services. Mental Health, Substance Use and Recovery.

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**The Commonwealth of Massachusetts**

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

An Act establishing peer support services.

*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 19 of the General Laws is hereby amended by adding the following section:-

2 Section 26. (a) As used in this section, the following words shall, unless the context  
3 requires otherwise, have the following meanings:

4 “Entity”, a facility or organization that provides mental health or substance use disorder  
5 treatment.

6 “Peer support services”, services, assistance and support based on the principles of  
7 mutual respect, responsibility and decision making provided to persons facing mental health  
8 conditions or substance use recovery by peer support specialists.

9 “Peer support specialist”, an individual who is certified by the department to provide peer  
10 support services and has lived experience with the process of recovery from a mental health or  
11 substance use condition as a consumer of such recovery services, the family member of a

12 consumer of such services or some other individual who has experience with such recovery  
13 services.

14 (b) The department shall develop and maintain a program to offer peer support services to  
15 consumers of mental health and substance use disorder support services through entities certified  
16 by the department to provide such services.

17 (c) The department shall develop a peer support services certification program to certify  
18 entities seeking approval to offer peer support services. The department shall define the  
19 qualifications, practice guidelines and supervision standards for certification of an entity. The  
20 department may utilize best practice materials published by the federal Substance Abuse and  
21 Mental Health Services Administration, the United States Department of Veterans Affairs and  
22 related notable experts in the field as a basis for development of these definitions. An entity  
23 seeking approval to offer such services shall submit an application to the department at such  
24 time, in such manner and containing such information as the department may reasonably require.

25 (d) The department shall contract with certified entities to provide peer support services.  
26 Such certified entities shall be responsible for the provision and management of peer support  
27 services including, but not limited to: (i) recruiting peer support specialists; (ii) training peer  
28 support specialists; (iii) supervising and overseeing peer support specialists; and (iv) conducting  
29 informational sessions on the functions and qualifications of peer support specialists.

30 (e) The department may contract with entities that are not certified pursuant to this  
31 section at its discretion for the purposes of providing peer support services.

32 (f) The department shall develop a peer support services specialist certification program  
33 to certify individuals seeking certification as peer support specialists. The department shall

34 define the curriculum and core competencies required for certification of a peer support  
35 specialist. The department may utilize best practice materials published by the federal Substance  
36 Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, the United States Department of Veterans  
37 Affairs and related notable experts in the field as a basis for development of these definitions. An  
38 individual seeking certification as a peer support specialist shall submit an application to the  
39 department at such time, in such manner and containing such information as the department may  
40 reasonably require.

41 (g) A peer support specialist shall be required to complete peer support training offered  
42 by the certified entity that employs the specialist, including any continuing education or  
43 recertification requirements established by the department.

44 (h) Nothing in this section shall prohibit a peer support specialist from receiving payment  
45 for their services pursuant to Title XVIII of the Social Security Act.