

SENATE No. 839

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PRESENTED BY:

John F. Keenan

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 behavioral health workforce center.

PETITION OF:

NAME:

John F. Keenan

DISTRICT/ADDRESS:

Norfolk and Plymouth

SENATE No. 839

By Mr. Keenan, a petition (accompanied by bill, Senate, No. 839) of John F. Keenan for legislation to establish a behavioral health workforce center. Higher Education.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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

An Act establishing a behavioral health workforce center.

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. Chapter 15A of the General Laws, as appearing in the 2018 Official
2 Edition, is hereby amended by adding after Section 44 the following new section:-

3 Section 45. There shall be a Behavioral Health Workforce Center of Excellence, herein
4 referred to as the Center, to gather data and research to advise policy leaders on how to address
5 the current crisis in behavioral health workforce across the Commonwealth.

6 The commissioner shall establish said Center at the state college or university he or she
7 deems most appropriate to fulfill this role.

8 The Center shall:

9 (a) Engage a diverse, cross discipline group of stakeholders to address the needs of the
10 field in studying the current landscape, mapping or building clear career ladders, and identifying
11 and addressing training needs.

12 (b) Annually inventory the professional license and certifications available for those who
13 work in the mental health and addiction treatment field, including but not limited to, the number
14 of licensed and certified individuals in the state, the academic and supervisory requirements to
15 achieve each certification, the scope of practice of each license, the academic programs available
16 in the state and the cost of these programs.

17 (c) Annually create aggregate demographic and geographic profiles of the current field of
18 practitioners.

19 (d) Annually inventory the number of professional and paraprofessional practitioners
20 delivering direct clinical or recovery services, including practitioner acceptance of insurance.

21 (e) Work with the Advisory Committee to annually inventory the workforce needs in the
22 behavioral health system to establish the gaps that exist by professional license and certificate,
23 and practice setting.

24 (f) Inventory the number of individuals with professional licenses and/or certifications
25 who no longer practice behavioral health in third-party reimbursable settings.

26 (g) Examine any regulatory changes recommended by licensing and registration bodies at
27 the Division of Professional Licensure and the Department of Public Health and offer public,
28 written assessment to these entities during the regulatory process that includes the effect of these
29 requirements on the existing workforce and the future workforce pipeline.

30 (h) Examine existing training funds across state and federal agencies, including but not
31 limited to Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development (EOLWD), Commonwealth
32 Corporation, the Executive Office of Education, the Executive Office of Health and Human

33 Services and its constituent agencies and make recommendations on ways to leverage funding
34 and resources to focus on existing and needed training programs for the field.

35 (i) Work with existing education and training programs on curriculum improvements
36 focused on best practices in the current behavioral health landscape and coordinate these needs
37 with state purchasing agencies to better align educational institutions with needs in the field.

38 (j) Examine existing loan forgiveness opportunities for practitioners and make
39 recommendations on ways to expand current initiatives.

40 (k) Establish an advisory committee, co-chaired by an appointee from the Division of
41 Higher Education and a representative of the Association for Behavioral Healthcare, and
42 including, but not limited to, representation from the Executive Office of Health and Human
43 Services, the Department of Public Health, the Department of Mental Health, Blue Cross and
44 Blue Shield of Massachusetts, the Massachusetts Association of Health Plans, the Executive
45 Office of Labor and Workforce Development, NAMI Massachusetts, Massachusetts
46 Organization for Addiction Recovery, Parent Professional Advocacy League, Massachusetts
47 Association for Behavioral Health Systems, National Association of Social Workers –
48 Massachusetts, Massachusetts Psychological Association, Massachusetts Mental Health
49 Counselors Association and the Massachusetts Association for Mental Health to meet regularly
50 and discuss the state of behavioral health workforce in Massachusetts.

51 (l) Create and fund a technical assistance center that funds special projects and assistance
52 for value-based purchasing and care preparation and behavioral health and primary care
53 integration.

54 (m) Examine other matters deemed appropriate by the Center.