

SENATE No. 1866

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PRESENTED BY:

Paul R. Feeney

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 to establish a commission to report on the Moral Budget.

PETITION OF:

NAME:	DISTRICT/ADDRESS:	
<i>Paul R. Feeney</i>	<i>Bristol and Norfolk</i>	
<i>Joanne M. Comerford</i>	<i>Hampshire, Franklin and Worcester</i>	<i>3/3/2021</i>
<i>Erika Uyterhoeven</i>	<i>27th Middlesex</i>	<i>3/15/2021</i>

SENATE No. 1866

By Mr. Feeney, a petition (accompanied by bill, Senate, No. 1866) of Paul R. Feeney, Joanne M. Comerford and Erika Uyterhoeven for legislation to establish a commission to report on the Moral Budget. Revenue.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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

An Act to establish a commission to report on the Moral Budget.

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. Moral Budget Resolution

2 Whereas we live in the richest country in the history of the world and have abundant
3 resources to ensure dignity and health of people and the country, the coronavirus pandemic and
4 its consequences have revealed the need to dramatically change our priorities and reallocate
5 funding to preserve the future of the people of this Commonwealth and the country as a whole;

6 According to 2010 US Census categories some 10% - close to 700,000 people - are living
7 below the poverty level in Massachusetts. Many more are struggling with high housing costs,
8 student debt, and inability to afford adequate healthcare. The number of persons experiencing
9 homelessness last year was at least 20,000.

10 Before the pandemic about 30% of the Massachusetts budget derived from Federal
11 Government funds. With the CARES Act and additional federal stimuli, even more of the state
12 budget is coupled to the federal budget.

13 Therefore, be it resolved that the Members of the Massachusetts Legislature call upon the
14 MA members of the U.S. Congressional Delegation and the President to support the Moral
15 Budget for America (developed by the Poor People’s Campaign and the Institute for Policy
16 Studies) to revive, repair and renew our national and state economies.

17 Education: The Moral Budget invests \$24.4 billion per year in K-12 schools and teachers
18 to boost academic performance among poor and struggling children. This would bring \$480
19 million to Massachusetts for public education, sufficient to hire more than 6,000 well trained
20 teachers. This would significantly contribute to the \$2 billion needed to fully fund the State
21 Fund Our Future Education initiative.

22 The Moral Budget also invests about \$70 billion per year for the federal and state shares
23 of providing four years of free public college. This would bring about \$1.4 billion into
24 Massachusetts, and lift up the prospects of completing their education for the 260,000 students in
25 the public colleges and universities.

26 Housing: The Moral budget provides \$44 billion per year in investments in a housing
27 trust fund to build, maintain, and preserve affordable rental homes. The sums coming to
28 Massachusetts could be used to end Homelessness in the Commonwealth.

29 Healthcare: Whereas the largest expenditure in the Massachusetts budget is for
30 healthcare, and 379,000 people are still uninsured, the Moral Budget contributes funding for
31 States to transition to lower cost single payer health care;

32 Family Services: As an immediate measure, The Moral Budget restores \$8.9 billion for
33 Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) to previous funding levels, to provide a
34 modicum of relief to poor families who deserve a fully functional safety net. TANF has not been

35 adjusted for inflation since the Clinton administration. The restored budget would bring
36 \$180,000,000 to poor families in Mass.

37 Veterans Services: Whereas some 20% of veterans in Massachusetts are living on less
38 than \$35,000 a year and one in five are living in poverty, the Moral Budget eliminates veteran's
39 homelessness, expands access to mental health care and expands job training for veterans;

40 Transportation: The Moral Budget increases in federal transportation spending would
41 bring about \$1.2 billion/year for Massachusetts. This would enable re-establishing train service
42 for "South Coast Rail" to New Bedford and Fall River; begin design for the North Station -
43 South Station Connector, which would unify the nearly entire east coast rail while also fixing
44 many confusing commutes; extending the Blue Line to Lynn; and expanding Regional Bus
45 Service for Central and Western MA.

46 Right to Vote and Mass Incarceration: Whereas almost 3,000 black adults in
47 Massachusetts cannot vote due to felony voting restrictions, the Moral Budget increases funding
48 for voter protection and legal assistance programs and funds public financing of campaigns.

49 Clean Water: By Investing \$37.2 billion a year in water infrastructure, the Moral Budget
50 would create up to 945,000 jobs while providing safe drinking water to thousands of
51 communities that don't have it. Some 18,000 of these jobs would be provided to Massachusetts
52 residents, enabling upgrades in water systems of cities and towns throughout the
53 Commonwealth.

54 Climate Protection: Given that in Massachusetts 10,450 tons of NOx are emitted yearly, a
55 leading cause of respiratory problems, the Moral Budget invests \$200 billion in transitioning to

56 clean renewable energy, crumbling roads, bridges, and a Green New Deal to build a fully
57 modernized electric grid and create about 50,000 high-quality jobs in Massachusetts.

58 Fair Wages: A \$15 federal minimum wage enacted immediately would raise pay for 49
59 million workers nationally by a combined \$328 billion per year. This would benefit about a
60 million Massachusetts workers, raising their purchasing power by \$600 million.

61 Peace and Security: Hundreds of Massachusetts residents have been wounded or lost their
62 lives fighting in Iraq, Afghanistan and beyond since 2001. Pursuing these military adventures
63 have diverted funds from sectors that will make us more resilient and safer such as healthcare,
64 education, the transition to renewable energy, and increased protection of vital natural resources
65 in The Moral Budget saves as much as \$350 billion per year in the federal budget by cutting
66 current Pentagon spending for fighting endless wars, maintaining a worldwide network of 800
67 military bases, stoking dangerous arms races, and subsidizing for-profit corporate contractors,
68 leaving a military budget that would still be larger than that of China, Russia, and Iran combined.
69 These savings would finance many of the investments listed above.

70 SECTION 2

71 (a) There shall be a Moral Budget commission established pursuant to section 2A of
72 chapter 4 of the General Laws, referred to in this section as the Commission. The Commission
73 shall evaluate and report on the impact that passage of the People's Budget would have on
74 Massachusetts, including currently underfunded sectors such as environment, education,
75 healthcare, transportation, and the arts.

76 (b) The Commission shall consist of 15 members: 2 of whom shall be members of the
77 House of Representatives appointed by the Speaker of the House of representatives; 1 of whom

78 shall be a member of the House of Representatives appointed by the minority leader of the House
79 of Representatives; 2 of whom shall be members of the Senate appointed by the President of the
80 senate; 1 of whom shall be a member of the Senate appointed by the Minority Leader of the
81 Senate; 2 of whom shall be appointed by the governor of which one shall be a member of the
82 Executive Office of Administration and Finance; 1 of whom shall be a member of Massachusetts
83 Peace Action; 1 of whom shall be a member of the Mass Taxpayers Association; 1 of whom
84 shall be a member of Mass Budget and Policy Center; 1 of whom shall be a board member of the
85 Associated Industries of Massachusetts; 1 of whom shall be a member of the SEIU Executive
86 Council; 1 of whom shall be a board member of the Alliance of Business Leadership; 1
87 appointed by the Treasurer of the Commonwealth

88 (c) The Commission shall submit its final report to the governor, the House and Senate
89 chairs of the Joint Committee on Revenue not later than six months after enactment which shall
90 include: (i) an evaluation of the potential impacts of the resolution upon the standard of living of
91 Massachusetts residents.