

**HOUSE . . . . . No. 4161**

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OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR  
**COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS**  
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**MAURA T. HEALEY**  
GOVERNOR

**KIMBERLEY DRISCOLL**  
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

*November 2, 2023*

To the Honorable Senate and House of Representatives,

I am filing for your consideration a bill entitled, “An Act to Rename the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission, MassAbility, in order to Reflect the Self Determination and Limitless Possibilities of People with Disabilities.”

For many decades, people with disabilities have challenged mainstream culture to recognize disability not as the whole of who they are, but as one important aspect of their lives. This movement has inspired the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC) since its inception in 1956, shaping the values and programs of an agency committed to breaking down social barriers and expanding what is possible for people with disabilities across the Commonwealth.

Since 1956, MRC has provided vocational rehabilitation, job placement, independent living, and community-based services to empower and support people with disabilities to live life on their own terms, with equal rights, diversity, and accessibility as the priority. MRC currently serves approximately 20,000 individuals within the Commonwealth and is leading innovation through the NextGen program, a STEM focused rapid employment model for young adults with disabilities.

While expressing pride in MRC’s work and mission, members of the disability community have also long expressed concern with MRC’s name. The term “rehabilitation” has come to carry connotations that can feel stigmatizing or misleading. I believe that the name MassAbility is best suited not only to represent the values and mission of the agency, but to embody the self-determination, competence, and potential for success intrinsic to all people with disabilities.

This legislation changes the name of the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission to MassAbility and removes uses of the term “handicap,” “handicapped,” and “retarded,” replacing them with “barrier,” “person with a disability,” and “person with intellectual disabilities.” The legislation further repeals G.L. c. 6 § 78A, providing for the administration of an antiquated, and now non-existent, program for extended sheltered employment for people with disabilities.

MassAbility is more than just a new name. It is an opportunity to demonstrate our commitment to tearing down systemic barriers for people with disabilities in the workforce and in our communities. Changing the words we use when we speak about disability is one more step toward building more inclusive and equitable communities that amplify the inherent worth and potential of all their members.

For all these reasons, I urge your favorable consideration of this legislation.

Respectfully submitted,

Maura T. Healey,  
*Governor*

**The Commonwealth of Massachusetts**

**In the One Hundred and Ninety-Third General Court  
(2023-2024)**

An Act to rename the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission, Massability, to reflect the self-determination and limitless possibilities of people with disabilities.

*Whereas*, The deferred operation of this act would tend to defeat its purpose, which is to promote equity and increase opportunities for persons with disabilities by renaming the commission and updating language used to more accurately reflect the values and core mission of the agency, therefore it is hereby declared to be an emergency law, necessary for the immediate preservation of the public convenience.

*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. Section 17 of chapter 6 of the General Laws, as appearing in the 2022  
2 Official Edition, is hereby amended by striking out, in line 13, the words “Massachusetts  
3 Rehabilitation Commission” and inserting in place thereof the following word:- MassAbility.

4           SECTION 2. Section 74 of chapter 6 of the General Laws, as so appearing, is hereby  
5 amended by striking out the title and inserting in place thereof the following title:- MassAbility;  
6 establishment; expenditure of funds.

7           SECTION 3. Said section 74 of chapter 6, as so appearing, is hereby further amended by  
8 striking out, in lines 2, 6, and 9, the word “handicapped persons” and inserting in place thereof,  
9 in each instance, the following: persons with disabilities.

10 SECTION 4. Said section 74 of chapter 6, as so appearing, is hereby further amended by  
11 striking out, in lines 2 to 3, the words “Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission” and inserting  
12 in place thereof the following word:- MassAbility.

13 SECTION 5. Section 75 of chapter 6 of the General Laws, as so appearing, is hereby  
14 amended by striking out the title and inserting in place thereof the following title:- MassAbility;  
15 commissioner; employees; other offices.

16 SECTION 6. Said section 75 of chapter 6, as so appearing, is hereby further amended by  
17 striking out, in line 2, the word “rehabilitation” and inserting in place thereof the following  
18 word:- MassAbility.

19 SECTION 7. Said section 75 of chapter 6, as so appearing, is hereby further amended by  
20 striking out, in lines 10, 79, and 88, the word “he” and inserting in place thereof, in each  
21 instance, the following word:- they.

22 SECTION 8. Said section 75 of chapter 6, as so appearing, is hereby further amended by  
23 striking out, in lines 10, 11, 79, 80, and 82, the word “his” and inserting in place thereof, in each  
24 instance, the following word: “their”

25 SECTION 9. Said section 75 of chapter 6, as so appearing, is hereby further amended by  
26 striking out, in line 85, the word “him” and inserting in place thereof the following word:- them.

27 SECTION 10. Section 76 of chapter 6 of the General Laws, as so appearing, is hereby  
28 amended by striking out the title and inserting in place thereof the following title:- MassAbility;  
29 advisory council.

30 SECTION 11. Said section 76 of chapter 6, as so appearing, is hereby further amended by  
31 striking out, in line 7, the word “handicaps” and inserting in place thereof the following words:-  
32 a disability.

33 SECTION 12. Said section 76 of chapter 6, as so appearing, is hereby further amended by  
34 striking out, in line 11, the word “his” and inserting in place thereof the following word:- their.

35 SECTION 13. Section 77 of chapter 6 of the General Laws, as so appearing, is hereby  
36 amended by striking out the title and inserting in place thereof the following title:- MassAbility;  
37 definitions applicable to Secs. 74 to 84.

38 SECTION 14. Said section 77 of chapter 6, as so appearing, is hereby further amended by  
39 striking out, in lines 5, 19, 34, and 58 the words “handicapped individual” and inserting in place  
40 thereof, in each instance, the following words:- person with a disability.

41 SECTION 15. Said section 77 of chapter 6, as so appearing, is hereby further amended by  
42 striking out, in line 17 the words “handicapped individual’s” and inserting in place thereof, in  
43 each instance, the following words:- person’s with a disability.

44 SECTION 16. Said section 77 of chapter 6, as so appearing, is hereby further amended by  
45 striking out, in lines 25, 29 to 30, and 38 the words “handicapped individuals” and inserting in  
46 place thereof, in each instance, the following words:- persons with disabilities.

47 SECTION 17. Said section 77 of chapter 6, as so appearing, is hereby further amended by  
48 striking out, in line 45, the word “handicapped” and inserting in place thereof the following  
49 words:- person with a disability.

50 SECTION 18. Said section 77 of chapter 6, as so appearing, is hereby further amended by  
51 striking out, in line 49, the words “Handicapped person” and inserting in place thereof the  
52 following words:- Person with a disability.

53 SECTION 19. Said section 77 of chapter 6, as so appearing, is hereby further amended by  
54 striking out, in line 51, the word “handicap” and inserting in place thereof the following word:-  
55 barrier.

56 SECTION 20. Said section 77 of chapter 6, as so appearing, is hereby further amended by  
57 striking out, in lines 34, 53, and 59, the word “his” and inserting in place thereof, in each  
58 instance, the following word:- their.

59 SECTION 21. Said section 77 of chapter 6, as so appearing, is hereby further amended by  
60 striking out lines 42 to 48.

61 SECTION 22. Section 78 of chapter 6 of the General Laws, as so appearing, is hereby  
62 amended by striking out the title and inserting in place thereof the following title:- MassAbility;  
63 vocational rehabilitation services; independent living services.

64 SECTION 23. Said section 78 of chapter 6, as so appearing, is hereby further amended by  
65 striking out, in lines 3 to 4 and 23, the words “handicapped individual” and inserting in place  
66 thereof, in each instance, the following words:- person with a disability.

67 SECTION 24. Said section 78 of chapter 6, as so appearing, is hereby further amended by  
68 striking out, in lines 8 to 9, and 16 to 17, the words “handicapped individuals” and inserting in  
69 place thereof, in each instance, the following words:- persons with disabilities.

70 SECTION 25. Said section 78 of chapter 6, as so appearing, is hereby further amended by  
71 striking out, in line 15, the words “handicapped individuals” and inserting in place thereof, in  
72 each instance, the following words:- person with a disability.

73 SECTION 26. Said section 78 of chapter 6, as s appearing, is hereby further amended by  
74 striking out, in lines 5 and 24, the word “his” and inserting in place thereof, in each instance, the  
75 following word:- their.

76 SECTION 27. Section 78A of chapter 6 of the General Laws is hereby repealed.

77 SECTION 28. Section 79 of chapter 6 of the General Laws, as so appearing, is hereby  
78 amended by striking out the title and inserting in place thereof the following title:- MassAbility;  
79 powers and duties.

80 SECTION 29. Said section 79 of chapter 6, as so appearing, is hereby further amended by  
81 striking out, in lines 20 and 27, the words “handicapped individuals” and inserting in place  
82 thereof, in each instance, the following words:- persons with disabilities.

83 SECTION 30. Said section 79 of chapter 6, as so appearing, is hereby further amended by  
84 striking out, in line 25, the words “handicapped persons” and inserting in place thereof the  
85 following words:- persons with disabilities.

86 SECTION 31. Said section 79 of chapter 6, as so appearing, is hereby further amended by  
87 striking out, in line 28, the words “handicapped individual” and inserting in place thereof the  
88 following words:- person with a disability.

89 SECTION 32. Said section 79 of chapter 6, as so appearing, is hereby further amended by  
90 striking out, in line 29, the word “his” and inserting in place thereof the following word:- their.

91 SECTION 33. Section 80 of chapter 6 of the General Laws, as so appearing, is hereby  
92 amended by striking out the title and inserting in place thereof the following title:- MassAbility;  
93 additional powers and duties.

94 SECTION 34. Section 81 of chapter 6 of the General Laws, as so appearing, is hereby  
95 amended by striking out the title and inserting in place thereof the following title:- MassAbility  
96 cooperation with state agencies; agreements.

97 SECTION 35. Said section 81 of chapter 6, as so appearing, is hereby further amended by  
98 striking out, in lines 8, 10, 14, and 17, the words “handicapped persons” and inserting in place  
99 thereof, in each instance, the following words:- persons with disabilities.

100 SECTION 36. Section 82 of chapter 6 of the General Laws, as so appearing, is hereby  
101 amended by striking out the title and inserting in place thereof the following title:- MassAbility;  
102 federal funds; custodian; expenditure.

103 SECTION 37. Said section 82 of chapter 6, as so appearing, is hereby further amended by  
104 striking out, in line 5, the words “Massachusetts rehabilitation”.

105 SECTION 38. Section 83 of chapter 6 of the General Laws, as so appearing, is hereby  
106 amended by striking out the title and inserting in place thereof the following title:- MassAbility;  
107 gifts to commission; acceptance; investment.

108 SECTION 39. Section 84 of chapter 6 of the General Laws, as so appearing, is hereby  
109 amended by striking out the title and inserting in place thereof the following title:- MassAbility:  
110 information or records confidential.



111 SECTION 40. Said section 84 of chapter 6, as so appearing, is hereby further amended by  
112 striking out, in line 24, the words “handicapped person” and inserting in place thereof the  
113 following words:- person with a disability.

114 SECTION 41. Said section 84 of chapter 6, as so appearing, is hereby further amended by  
115 striking out, in lines 12 and 13, the word “his” and inserting in place thereof, in each instance,  
116 the following word:- their.

117 SECTION 42. Section 105 of chapter 6 of the General Laws, as so appearing, is hereby  
118 amended by striking out, in line 16, the words “the Massachusetts rehabilitation commission”  
119 and inserting in place thereof the following word:- MassAbility.

120 SECTION 43. Section 125 of chapter 6 of the General Laws, as so appearing, is hereby  
121 amended by striking out, in lines 6 and 36, the word “rehabilitation” and inserting in place  
122 thereof, in each instance, the following word:- MassAbility.

123 SECTION 44. Section 126 of chapter 6 of the General Laws, as so appearing, is hereby  
124 amended by striking out, in line 4, the words “the rehabilitation commission” and inserting in  
125 place thereof the following word:- MassAbility.

126 SECTION 45. Section 128 of chapter 6 of the General Laws, as so appearing, is hereby  
127 amended by striking out, in lines 4 to 5, the words “the rehabilitation commission” and inserting  
128 in place thereof the following word:- MassAbility.

129 SECTION 46. Section 189 of chapter 6 of the General Laws, as so appearing, is hereby  
130 amended by striking out, in line 2, the word “rehabilitation” and inserting in place thereof the  
131 following word:- MassAbility.

132 SECTION 47. Section 217 of chapter 6 of the General Laws, as so appearing, is hereby  
133 amended by striking out, in lines 14 to 15, the words “the Massachusetts rehabilitation  
134 commission” and inserting in place thereof the following word:- MassAbility.

135 SECTION 48. Section 16 of chapter 6A of the General Laws, as so appearing, is hereby  
136 amended by striking out, in line 32, the words “the Massachusetts rehabilitation commission”  
137 and inserting in place thereof the following word:- MassAbility.

138 SECTION 49. Section 16F of chapter 6A of the General Laws, as so appearing, is hereby  
139 amended by striking out, in line 9, the words “Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission” and  
140 inserting in place thereof the following word:- MassAbility.

141 SECTION 50. Section 16O of chapter 6A of the General Laws, as so appearing, is hereby  
142 amended by striking out, in lines 32 to 33, the words “the Massachusetts rehabilitation  
143 commission” and inserting in place thereof the following word:- MassAbility.

144 SECTION 51. Section 59 of chapter 10 of the General Laws, as so appearing, is hereby  
145 amended by striking out, in lines 15 and 19, the word “rehabilitation” and inserting in place  
146 thereof, in each instance, the following word:- MassAbility.

147 SECTION 52. Section 19 of chapter 15A of the General Laws, as so appearing, is hereby  
148 amended by striking out, in lines 40 to 41, the words “the Massachusetts rehabilitation  
149 commission” and inserting in place thereof the following word:- MassAbility.

150 SECTION 53. Section 30A of chapter 15A of the General Laws, as so appearing, is  
151 hereby amended by striking out, in lines 26, 102 to 103, 113, and 160 to 161, the words “the

152 Massachusetts rehabilitation commission”, and inserting in place, in each instance, thereof the  
153 following word:- MassAbility.

154 SECTION 54. Section 2A of chapter 18 of the General Laws, as so appearing, is hereby  
155 amended by striking out, in lines 14 to 15, 28 to 29, and 44 to 45, the words “the Massachusetts  
156 rehabilitation commission” and inserting in place thereof, in each instance, the following word:-  
157 MassAbility.

158 SECTION 55. Section 9 of chapter 18A of the General Laws, as so appearing, is hereby  
159 amended by striking out, in line 7, the word “rehabilitation” and inserting in place thereof the  
160 following word:- MassAbility.

161 SECTION 56. Section 4 of chapter 19C of the General Laws, as so appearing, is hereby  
162 amended by striking out, in lines 29 to 30, the words “the Massachusetts rehabilitation  
163 commission” and inserting in place thereof the following word:- MassAbility.

164 SECTION 57. Section 13A of chapter 22 of the General Laws, as so appearing, is hereby  
165 amended by striking out, in line 121, the words “the Massachusetts rehabilitation commission”  
166 and inserting in place thereof the following word:- MassAbility.

167 SECTION 58. Section 6 of chapter 23H of the General Laws, as so appearing, is hereby  
168 amended by striking out, in lines 6 to 7, the words “Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission”  
169 and inserting in place thereof the following word:- MassAbility.

170 SECTION 59. Section 6 of chapter 23H of the General Laws, as so appearing, is further  
171 amended by striking out, in line 7, the words “handicapped persons” and inserting in place  
172 thereof the following words:- persons with disabilities.

173 SECTION 60. Section 7 of chapter 23H of the General Laws, as so appearing, is hereby  
174 amended by striking out, in lines 8 to 9, the words “the Massachusetts rehabilitation  
175 commission” and inserting in place thereof the following word:- MassAbility.

176 SECTION 61. Section 2RRRRR of chapter 29 of the General Laws, as so appearing, is  
177 hereby amended by striking out the title, and inserting in place thereof the following title:-  
178 MassAbility Vocational Rehabilitation Reimbursement Fund.

179 SECTION 62. Said section 2RRRRR of chapter 29, as so appearing, is hereby further  
180 amended by striking out, in lines 3 to 4, 5, and 8 to 9, the words “Massachusetts Rehabilitation  
181 Commission” and inserting in place thereof, in each instance, the following word:- MassAbility.

182 SECTION 63. Section 1 of chapter 31 of the General Laws, as so appearing, is hereby  
183 amended by striking out, in lines 106 to 107, the words “the Massachusetts rehabilitation  
184 commission” and inserting in place thereof the following word:- MassAbility.

185 SECTION 64. Section 47 of chapter 31 of the General Laws, as so appearing, is hereby  
186 amended by striking out, in lines 9 to 10, 16, 21 to 22, and 26 to 27, the words “the Massachusetts  
187 rehabilitation commission” and inserting in place thereof the following word:- MassAbility.

188 SECTION 65. Section 47 of chapter 31 of the General Laws, as so appearing, is further  
189 amended by striking out, in line 33, the words “mentally retarded person” and inserting in place  
190 thereof the following words:- person with an intellectual disability.

191 SECTION 66. Section 5B of chapter 32 of the General Laws, as so appearing, is hereby  
192 amended by striking out, in lines 68 to 69, the words “the Massachusetts rehabilitation  
193 commission” and inserting in place thereof the following word:- MassAbility.

194 SECTION 67. Subsection (z)(1) of section 6 of chapter 62 of the General Laws, as so  
195 appearing, is hereby amended by striking out, in lines 1341 to 1342, the words “the  
196 Massachusetts rehabilitation commission” and inserting in place thereof the following word:-  
197 MassAbility.

198 SECTION 68. Subsection (z)(2) of section 6 of chapter 62 of the General Laws, as so  
199 appearing, is hereby amended by striking out, in lines 1351 to 1352, the words “the  
200 Massachusetts rehabilitation commission” and inserting in place thereof the following word:-  
201 MassAbility.

202 SECTION 69. Section 38JJ of chapter 63 of the General Laws, as so appearing, is hereby  
203 amended by striking out, in lines 13 and 22 to 23, the words “the Massachusetts rehabilitation  
204 commission” and inserting in place thereof the following word:- MassAbility.

205 SECTION 70. Section 12A of chapter 71B of the General Laws, as so appearing, is  
206 hereby amended by striking out, in lines 17 to 18, the words “sheltered employment.”.

207 SECTION 71. Section 12B of chapter 71B of the General Laws, as so appearing, is  
208 hereby amended by striking out, in line 15, the words “the Massachusetts rehabilitation  
209 commission” and inserting in place thereof the following word:- MassAbility.

210 SECTION 72. Section 12C of chapter 71B of the General Laws, as so appearing, is  
211 hereby amended by striking out, in lines 36 and 42, the words “the Massachusetts rehabilitation  
212 commission” and inserting in place thereof, in each instance, the following word:- MassAbility.

213 SECTION 73. Section 17 of chapter 71B of the General Laws, as so appearing, is hereby  
214 amended by striking out, in lines 48, 85, and 97, the words “the Massachusetts rehabilitation  
215 commission” inserting in place, in each instance, thereof the following word:- MassAbility.

216 SECTION 74. Section 2A of chapter 111 of the General Laws, as so appearing, is hereby  
217 amended by striking out the title and inserting in place thereof the following title:- Co-operation  
218 with MassAbility.

219 SECTION 75. Said section 2A of chapter 111, as so appearing, is hereby further amended  
220 by striking out, in lines 2 to 3, the words “the Massachusetts rehabilitation commission” and  
221 inserting in place thereof the following word:- MassAbility.

222 SECTION 76. Said section 2A of chapter 111, as so appearing, is hereby further amended  
223 by striking out, in lines 4 to 5, the words “handicapped person” and inserting in place thereof the  
224 following words:- person with a disability.

225 SECTION 77. Section 4G of chapter 111 of the General Laws, as so appearing, is hereby  
226 amended by striking out, in lines 10 to 11, the words “the Massachusetts rehabilitation  
227 commission” and inserting in place thereof the following word:- MassAbility.

228 SECTION 78. Section 4 of chapter 111B of the General Laws, as so appearing, is hereby  
229 amended by striking out, in lines 20 to 21, the words “the Massachusetts rehabilitation  
230 commission” and inserting in place thereof the following word:- MassAbility.

231 SECTION 79. Section 38B of chapter 121B of the General Laws, a as so appearing, is  
232 hereby amended by striking out, in line 10, the words “the Massachusetts rehabilitation  
233 commission” and inserting in place thereof the following word:- MassAbility.

234 SECTION 80. Section 4 of chapter 151B of the General Laws, as so appearing, is hereby  
235 amended by striking out, in line 461, the words “the Massachusetts rehabilitation commission”  
236 and inserting in place thereof the following word:- MassAbility.

237 SECTION 81. Section 15E of chapter 166 of the General Laws, as so appearing, is  
238 hereby amended by striking out, in lines 111 to 112 and 195 to 196, the words “the  
239 Massachusetts rehabilitation commission” and inserting in place thereof the following word:-  
240 MassAbility.

241 SECTION 82. This act shall take effect upon its passage.