

HOUSE No. 3585

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PRESENTED BY:

Steven George Xiarhos

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 study the potential risks to cities and towns from the onshore electrical infrastructure supporting offshore wind energy generation projects.

PETITION OF:

NAME:	DISTRICT/ADDRESS:	DATE ADDED:
<i>Steven George Xiarhos</i>	<i>5th Barnstable</i>	<i>1/13/2025</i>
<i>Steven J. Ouellette</i>	<i>8th Bristol</i>	<i>1/15/2025</i>

HOUSE No. 3585

By Representative Xiarhos of Barnstable, a petition (accompanied by bill, House, No. 3585) of Steven George Xiarhos and Steven J. Ouellette for legislation to establish a special commission to study the potential risks to cities and towns from the onshore electrical infrastructure supporting offshore wind energy generation projects. Telecommunications, Utilities and Energy.

[SIMILAR MATTER FILED IN PREVIOUS SESSION
SEE HOUSE DOCKET, NO. 5210 OF 2023-2024.]

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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**In the One Hundred and Ninety-Fourth General Court
(2025-2026)**
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An Act establishing a special commission to study the potential risks to cities and towns from the onshore electrical infrastructure supporting offshore wind energy generation projects.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:

- 1 (a) There is hereby established a special commission to study the potential financial,
- 2 environmental, public health, and public safety risks to cities and towns and their residents from
- 3 onshore electric infrastructure associated with offshore wind energy generation projects as they
- 4 land in and traverse communities of the Commonwealth. Said special commission shall include
- 5 within the scope of its study, without limitation: (1) potential risks from the development,
- 6 operation, and catastrophic failure of underground and above-ground electric transmission lines,
- 7 electric substations, and associated onshore electric infrastructure; (2) potential risks of
- 8 electromagnetic emissions, smoke and fire as the result of catastrophic events, and the release of
- 9 oil, hazardous materials, and any other pollutants into the soil, water, and air; (3) potential

10 hazards to public and private water supplies, and the sole source aquifer, from onshore
11 infrastructure supporting offshore wind power; (4) the need for legislation requiring the
12 Commonwealth to indemnify cities and towns for their costs of responding to, and cleaning up
13 after, a catastrophic event relating to onshore infrastructure for offshore wind power, including
14 but not limited to fire and the release of oil and hazardous materials; (5) the implementation of
15 risk assessments and routine audits of electric substations supporting offshore wind-generated
16 power to ensure compliance with safety standards, including potential cybersecurity risks; (6) the
17 readiness of the Commonwealth to provide coordination across relevant state agencies in the
18 event of a catastrophic event relating to infrastructure to support offshore wind energy; and (6)
19 the need for facility-specific emergency response plans concerning onshore electric substations
20 and similar facilities supporting power generated by offshore wind energy.

21 (b) Said special commission shall consist of the following 15 members: the chairperson
22 of the Energy Facilities Siting Board or said chairperson's designee; the chairperson of the
23 Department of Public Utilities or said chairperson's designee; the commissioner of the
24 Department of Environmental Protection or said commissioner's designee; the commissioner of
25 the Department of Energy Resources or said commissioner's designee; the commissioner of the
26 Department of Public Health or such commissioner's designee; the Executive Director of the
27 Massachusetts Municipal Association; three members to be appointed by the Governor (one of
28 whom shall have professional experience with the development of offshore wind energy
29 generation projects; one of whom shall be a member of the city council, select board or town
30 council of a city or town that has entered into a host community agreement with an offshore
31 wind energy generation project; and one of whom shall have substantial professional experience
32 in public safety matters); two members appointed by the President of the Senate; one member

33 appointed by the Minority Leader of the Massachusetts Senate; two members appointed by the
34 Speaker of the House of Representatives; and, one member appointed by the Minority Leader of
35 the House of Representatives. All members of said commission shall be persons with substantial
36 knowledge or experience concerning the development of offshore wind energy projects,
37 municipal government, environmental contamination, public safety, public health, and/or the
38 potential for financial, environmental, public health, and public safety risks associated with
39 large-scale electric infrastructure. At its first meeting and not less than once annually thereafter,
40 the members of said Commission shall elect from among its members a chair, vice chair,
41 secretary, and such other officers as the members of the Commission deem necessary.

42 (c) The members of said Commission shall receive no compensation for their services but
43 shall be reimbursed for necessary traveling expenses incurred in the performance of their duties.

44 (d) Said commission shall hold meetings and public hearings at such times and places as
45 it may designate, provided that such meetings and public hearings shall be preferred to take
46 place, to the extent practicable, within cities and towns that are host communities for onshore
47 infrastructure to support offshore wind energy projects.

48 (e) A majority of the members of said Commission shall constitute a quorum for the
49 transaction of business of the Commission.

50 (f) The Commission shall present a preliminary report of its findings, together with
51 recommendations for legislative and regulatory changes, if any, not more than six months after
52 the effective date of this Act, and shall present regular reports of its findings and
53 recommendations at least once every six months thereafter. Such reports shall be made to the

- 54 Governor, to the Clerks of the Senate and House of Representatives, and to the House and Senate
- 55 Chairs of the Joint Committee on Economic Development and Emerging Technologies.