

HOUSE No. 4002

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PRESENTED BY:

Kip A. Diggs

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 relative to expanding benefits for disabled veterans and their families.

PETITION OF:

NAME:	DISTRICT/ADDRESS:	DATE ADDED:
<i>Kip A. Diggs</i>	<i>2nd Barnstable</i>	<i>1/16/2025</i>
<i>John H. Rogers</i>	<i>12th Norfolk</i>	<i>11/14/2025</i>

HOUSE No. 4002

By Representative Diggs of Barnstable, a petition (accompanied by bill, House, No. 4002) of Kip A. Diggs relative to benefits for disabled veterans and their families. Veterans and Federal Affairs.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

**In the One Hundred and Ninety-Fourth General Court
(2025-2026)**

An Act relative to expanding benefits for disabled veterans and their families.

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 115 of the General Laws, as amended by section 47 of chapter 178 of the acts of
2 2024, is hereby further amended by adding the following section:

3 Section 19. (a) For the purposes of this section, the following terms shall, unless the
4 context clearly requires otherwise, have the following meanings:

5 “Dependents”, legal dependents of the disabled veteran who are of driving age at the time
6 of their death.

7 “Disabled veteran”, a veteran with a service-connected disability recognized by the
8 United States Department of Veterans Affairs, regardless of disability per centage.

9 “Surviving spouse”, the spouse of a disabled veteran at the time of the veteran’s death;
10 provided that, they have not remarried.

11 (b)(1) Disabled veterans with service-connected disabilities rated less than 100 per cent
12 shall be eligible for proportional state benefits based on their disability rating. Disabled veteran
13 benefits shall include, but are not limited to: (i) property tax exemptions scaled to the veteran's
14 disability rating; (ii) partial healthcare assistance for medical, behavioral health and dental
15 services; (iii) tuition waivers or reductions at state colleges and universities in the
16 commonwealth, proportional to the veteran's disability rating; and (iv) priority placement in state
17 job training and employment programs.

18 (2) Disabled veterans with disabilities rated at 50 per cent or higher may apply for state-
19 funded grants to modify their homes to meet accessibility needs. Rental assistance or partial
20 housing vouchers shall be available to eligible such veterans based on financial need.

21 (3) Disabled veterans and their surviving spouses shall be exempt from all state-imposed
22 fees associated with business licenses, professional certifications and occupational licenses. The
23 department of veterans' services shall coordinate with relevant state agencies to streamline the
24 application and approval process for such fee waivers.

25 (c)(1) Surviving spouses shall remain eligible, after the disabled veteran's death, for the
26 following benefits: (i) enrollment in state-sponsored health insurance plans with premiums
27 equivalent to those offered to veterans; (ii) tuition-free education at state colleges and
28 universities; and (iii) access to state-funded behavioral health and counseling services.

29 The benefits available to surviving spouses pursuant to this paragraph shall continue for
30 the lifetime of the surviving spouse or until remarriage.

31 (2) Surviving spouses shall receive a monthly pension equal to 50 per cent of the
32 veteran's eligible benefits, adjusted annually for inflation.

33 (d) Until they reach the age of 24, dependents shall be eligible, after the disabled
34 veteran's death, for the following benefits: (i) financial assistance for education and living
35 expenses; and (ii) enrollment in state health insurance programs.

36 (e) The secretary of veterans' services shall be appointed as the liaison for surviving
37 spouses and dependents to assist in accessing benefits in this section.

38 (f) The department of veterans' services shall oversee the implementation of this section
39 and shall establish clear guidelines for application and eligibility verification.

40 (g) The department of veterans' services shall prepare an annual report that shall include:
41 (i) the number of veterans and survivors benefiting from this section; (ii) total expenditures and
42 cost projections for the upcoming fiscal year; and (iii) recommendations for improvements or
43 adjustments to this section. The annual report shall be submitted, not later than December 31 to
44 the: joint committee on veterans and federal affairs; house and senate committees on ways and
45 means; and the clerks of the house of representatives and senate. The annual report shall be made
46 publicly available on the department of veterans' services website to ensure transparency and
47 accountability.