

HOUSE No.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PRESENTED BY:

Natalie M. Higgins

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 transform the Commonwealth’s emergency response system and create housing strategies to end the homelessness of unaccompanied adults.

PETITION OF:

NAME:	DISTRICT/ADDRESS:	DATE ADDED:
<i>Natalie M. Higgins</i>	<i>4th Worcester</i>	<i>1/15/2025</i>

HOUSE No.

[Pin Slip]

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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

An Act to transform the Commonwealth’s emergency response system and create housing strategies to end the homelessness of unaccompanied adults.

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 23B of the General Laws is hereby amended by adding the following section:-

2 Section xx. As used in this section, the following words shall, unless the context clearly
3 requires otherwise, have the following meanings:-

4 “Congregate shelter”, any sheltering approach of mass dormitory-style bed space in
5 which individuals are not each sheltered in an individual or shared bedroom demarcated by walls
6 on all sides and a door.

7 “Continuum of care”, has the same meaning as defined in Section 578.3 of Title 24 of the
8 Code of Federal Regulations.

9 “Non-congregate shelter”, a setting where a person experiencing homelessness is
10 sheltered within an individual or shared bedroom with walls on all sides, a door, and preferably a
11 bathroom.

12 “Permanent supportive housing”, a model of housing that combines ongoing subsidized
13 housing matched with flexible health, behavioral health, social and other support services.

14 “Executive office of housing and livable communities” or “the executive office”, as
15 defined in Section 1 of Chapter 23B of the Massachusetts General Laws, as appearing in Section
16 102 of Chapter 7 of the Acts of 2023.

17 (a) The executive office working closely with municipalities and the continuums of care
18 shall conduct an objective and predictive study of future shelter and housing demand to
19 determine the type and amount of permanent supportive housing, non-congregate and congregate
20 shelter programmatic models necessary to reduce reliance on shelter and meet housing demand
21 one year following the effective date of this section. This study shall determine housing and
22 shelter capacity in every municipality in the commonwealth using calculations based on the ratio
23 of the number of units to the overall population in order to ensure adequate capacity statewide.

24 (b) The executive office shall develop a plan to prioritize the building of permanent
25 supportive housing and new non-congregate shelter solutions, that will supplement or replace
26 existing congregate shelter programs, with a five-year implementation goal to meet the unmet
27 needs of affordable housing capacity for each municipality in the commonwealth based on the
28 ratio of the number of units to the overall population, in accordance with the findings of the
29 study, in order to ensure adequate permanent supportive housing capacity statewide. The
30 executive office shall determine benchmark goals for the implementation of said study
31 recommendations within the five-year implementation goal to meet the permanent supportive
32 housing needs for each municipality in the Commonwealth.

33 (c) The executive office shall create an inventory of existing congregate shelters, the cost
34 to the commonwealth of these existing congregate shelters and conduct a feasibility study as to
35 the extent these current resources can be converted to non-congregate shelter and/or permanent
36 supportive housing. The executive office shall submit the plan to the chairs of the joint
37 committee on housing and the continuums of care within one year following the effective date of
38 this section.

39 (d) The executive office shall develop and provide a specific plan for unique housing
40 responses specifically targeted to unaccompanied adult persons experiencing homelessness,
41 including, but not limited to, long-term vouchers, shallow subsidy pools, rapid re-housing
42 resources and permanent supportive housing. The executive office shall develop housing
43 resources across a spectrum of need, but shall prioritize those elderly, disabled, medically
44 complex, and LGBTQ+ persons experiencing homelessness. The executive office shall review
45 and consider alternative construction models including, but not limited to, modular construction,
46 micro-units, repurposed hotels or other alternatives capable of bringing homeless housing
47 initiatives to an affordable scale necessary to end the homelessness of chronic and medically
48 complex persons experiencing homelessness. The executive office shall submit a plan for the
49 development of such housing to the chairs of the joint committee on housing and the continuums
50 of care no later than one year following the effective date of this section.