

HOUSE No.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PRESENTED BY:

Paul J. Donato

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 program to improve communications between local law enforcement and crime victims in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

PETITION OF:

| NAME: | DISTRICT/ADDRESS: | DATE ADDED: |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|------------------|
| <i>Paul J. Donato</i> | <i>35th Middlesex</i> | <i>1/14/2025</i> |

HOUSE No.

[Pin Slip]

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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

An Act to establish a program to improve communications between local law enforcement and crime victims in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

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 2 of chapter 28 of the acts of 2023 is hereby amended by inserting
2 after item 0330-0300 the following item:-

3 0330-0330 For use by the trial court to improve and modernize the Massachusetts trial
4 court case access website located at masscourts.org \$

5 SECTION 2. (a) As used in this section, the following words shall have the following
6 meanings, unless the context clearly requires otherwise:-

7 “Department”, the department of state police

8 “Local law enforcement agency”, a law enforcement entity in the Commonwealth of
9 Massachusetts.

10 “Office”, a District Attorney’s Office in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts .

11 “System”, a public safety citizen communications system established in subsection (b).

12 “Victim of a crime” or “victim”, a person who has suffered harm from a crime that 13
13 occurred in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

14 (b) (1) The office shall establish a program for the purpose of improving
15 communication between: (i) the office; (ii) local law enforcement agencies; (iii) the
16 department; and (iv) the victim of a crime. As part of the program, the office shall establish a
17 public safety citizen communications system that sends automated updates and messages to the
18 victim of a crime without requiring the victim to: (i) download an application for completion; (ii)
19 create an account; or (iii) register through a website, telephone call or other method used to
20 receive automated updates including, but not limited to, emails or text messages. The office shall
21 determine the process by which a victim of a crime opts out of the system.

22 (2) The automated updates and messages sent via the system shall include text messages
23 and emails, which may include, but shall not be limited to, the following information: (i) when
24 an incident report is created; (ii) updates on the involvement of a local law enforcement agency,
25 the department or the office; (iii) when a report was filed and received by a local law
26 enforcement agency, the department or the office; (iv) when a case has been opened by a local
27 law enforcement agency the department or the office (v) when an arrest has been made relating
28 to the case (vi) when a case is pending forensic results; (vii) when a case has been sent to the
29 office for prosecution; (viii) when a case has been closed by a local law enforcement agency, the
30 department or the office; (ix) updates on other relevant information to the case determined by the
31 office; (x) court dates; changes to hearing dates, and (xi) victim resources specific to the type of
32 crime committed, which may include hyperlinks or PDF attachments. The System shall have
33 demonstrated the capability to integrate to the Department of Corrections VINE-Link System to

34 create a seamless statewide notification platform if deemed necessary by the Department of
35 Corrections and the office. Nothing in this section shall prevent the office or a local law
36 enforcement agency from communicating with the victim of a crime over the phone or in person.

37 (3) The office shall create procedures for local law enforcement agencies and the
38 departments to provide the information pursuant to paragraph (2) to the office.

39 (4) The system shall offer messaging and survey functions in multiple languages that are
40 appropriate for victims of crimes, including messages and survey responses on an English
41 language dashboard for review by local law enforcement agencies, the department and the office.

42 (5) The system shall allow the victim of a crime to be able to choose the language
43 interface while using the system.

44 (c) In implementing the pilot program, the office shall seek to:

45 (1) ensure transparency, accountability, and effective communication from the beginning
46 through the end of the victim's interaction with local law enforcement agencies, the department
47 or the office;

48 (2) continue to improve the notification capabilities to the victim of a crime;

49 (3) provide all relevant information to the victim of a crime in an expedient manner; and

50 (4) expand the office's advocacy for victims of a crime and witnesses of a crime.

51 SECTION 3. (a) The office shall, no later than 1 year after the implementation of the
52 program, submit an annual report to the chairs of the joint committee on the judiciary
53 detailing:

54 (1) the status of the program;

55 (2) the participation between victims, local law enforcement agencies, the department and
56 the office with the system including, but not limited to, the total number of victims who
57 participated in the system in any city or town within the Commonwealth of Massachusetts
58 where the case is located; and

59 (3) a summary of the responses from the messaging and survey functions by victims of a
60 crime pursuant to paragraph (4) of subsection (b) on the successes of the system and possible
61 improvements that could be made to the system, provided that no personally identifying
62 information shall be included.

63 (b) The office shall provide a report on the overall evaluation of the program to the chairs
64 of the joint committee on the judiciary. The report shall make recommendations on:

65 (1) the feasibility and efficacy of permanently adopting the system as an optional
66 standardized pathway for providing automated updates and messages to crime victims in the
67 Commonwealth of Massachusetts;

68 (2) the feasibility and efficacy of permanently adopting the system as an optional
69 standardized pathway for providing automated updates and messages to victims in all counties in
70 the commonwealth; and

71 (3) if the system was successful as measured by the number of victims of a crime
72 participating in the system and the value of online notification for victims of a crime.