

**SENATE . . . . . No. 1656**

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**The Commonwealth of Massachusetts**

PRESENTED BY:

***John J. Cronin***

*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 connect veterans with earned benefits.

PETITION OF:

NAME:

*John J. Cronin*

DISTRICT/ADDRESS:

*Worcester and Middlesex*

**SENATE . . . . . No. 1656**

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By Mr. Cronin, a petition (accompanied by bill, Senate, No. 1656) of John J. Cronin for legislation to connect veterans with earned benefits. Public Safety and Homeland Security.

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[SIMILAR MATTER FILED IN PREVIOUS SESSION  
SEE SENATE, NO. 1497 OF 2023-2024.]

**The Commonwealth of Massachusetts**

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

An Act to connect veterans with earned benefits.

*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 3 of said chapter 276A, as so appearing, is hereby amended by  
2 striking out the first paragraph and inserting in place thereof the following paragraph:-

3 The probation officers of a district or municipal court, or an official designee of such a  
4 probation officer, when gathering information in accordance with section 85 of chapter 276, shall  
5 also screen each defendant for the purpose of enabling the judge at arraignment to consider the  
6 eligibility of the defendant for diversion to a program. The probation officers or an official  
7 designee shall also confirm the defendant's status as a veteran or as a person on active service in  
8 the armed forces of the United States and shall determine if the defendant has previously been  
9 diverted pursuant to clause (ii) of subsection (c) of section 4. Any person identified as a veteran,  
10 as defined in said clause, shall be provided with a list of contact information for the Veteran's

11 Administration, the local Veteran Justice Officer, their local Veteran Service Officer and the  
12 Veterans Administration Department of Veteran Services Suicide Hotline.

13 SECTION 2. The first paragraph of section 3 of chapter 276A, as so appearing, is hereby  
14 amended by adding after the first paragraph the following paragraph:

15 Once a veteran is identified by the indigency verification process, the office of probation  
16 shall refer said veteran to the Veteran Justice Officer for determination of Federal Benefits.