SENATE DOCKET, NO. 1138 FILED ON: 1/15/2025

SENATE . . . . . No. 2174

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PRESENTED BY:

Liz Miranda

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 an office of unsolved homicides.

PETITION OF:

NAME:	DISTRICT/ADDRESS:
Liz Miranda	*Second Suffolk*

SENATE DOCKET, NO. 1138 FILED ON: 1/15/2025

SENATE . . . . . No. 2174

By Ms. Miranda, a petition (accompanied by bill, Senate, No. 2174) of Liz Miranda for legislation to establish an office of unsolved homicides within the office of the attorney general. State Administration and Regulatory Oversight.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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

An Act establishing an office of unsolved homicides.

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

SECTION 1. Chapter 12 of the General Laws is hereby amended by inserting after section 35 the following section:

Section 36. (a)There shall be within the office of the attorney general an office of unsolved homicides. Said office shall coordinate with statewide unsolved murders task force to address homicides committed within the commonwealth which remain unsolved longer than three years after their occurrence.

(b) Definitions:

(1) The term “immediate family member” means a parent, parent-in-law, grandparent, grandparent-in-law, sibling, spouse or person in a substantive dating relationship or engagement relations, child or step-child.

11 (c) Immediate family members of Massachusetts homicide victims whose homicides have
12 gone unsolved for longer than three years shall have the right to petition the office of unsolved
13 homicides via written application to determine if a full reinvestigation would result in either the
14 identification of probative investigative leads or a likely perpetrator.

15 (d) The office of unsolved homicides shall report back to the immediate family member
16 in writing within ninety days of receiving the written application outcome of the case review.
17 The review shall include, but not be limited to:

18 (1) an analysis of the investigation of the case including what investigative steps or
19 follow-up steps might have been missed in the initial investigation;

20 (2) an assessment of whether witnesses should be interviewed and reinterviewed;

21 (3) an examination of physical evidence to see if all appropriate forensic testing and
22 analysis was performed in the first instance or if additional testing might produce information
23 relevant to the investigation; and

24 (4) an update of the case file using the most current investigative standards as of the date
25 of the review to the extent that it would help develop probative leads.

26 (e) The attorney general shall develop policies and promulgate regulations necessary to
27 the implementation of this section.

28 SECTION 2. Chapter 6 of the General Laws is hereby amended by inserting after section
29 184A the following 3 sections:-

30 Section 184B. (a) There shall be a statewide unsolved homicides task force, hereinafter
31 referred to as the task force, to investigate and prosecute unsolved homicides in the

32 commonwealth. The task force shall consist of the following members or their designees: the
33 attorney general, and the President of the Massachusetts District Attorney Association, who shall
34 serve as co-chairs; the secretary of public safety and security; the colonel of state police; the
35 commissioners or Chief of Police for Boston, Worcester, and Springfield; the chief counsel of
36 the committee for public counsel services; the district attorney for each county; and three
37 representatives from the survivor community.

38 (b) The task force shall establish teams of investigators and other professionals with
39 expertise in unsolved homicides to assist the district attorneys in each county in reviewing and
40 pursuing unsolved homicide cases. The teams shall include, but not be limited to, state police
41 detectives, detectives from Boston, Springfield, and Worcester Police Department, forensic
42 scientists, crime analysts, victim advocates, and defense attorneys. The teams shall have access
43 to all relevant records, evidence, and databases related to unsolved homicides, including those
44 maintained by local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies.

45 (c) The task force shall establish a toll-free tip line and a website for anyone to report
46 information about unsolved homicides in Massachusetts. The tip line and the website shall be
47 operated by the attorney general's office in collaboration with the state police, the Boston,
48 Worcester, Springfield Police Department, and the district attorneys. The tip line and the website
49 shall ensure the confidentiality and anonymity of the callers and users, unless they choose to
50 disclose their identity. The tip line and the website shall also provide information on rewards, if
51 any, for providing information that leads to an arrest or conviction in an unsolved homicide case.

52 (d) The task force shall meet at least quarterly to review the progress and challenges of
53 the teams, share best practices and resources, coordinate interagency cooperation, and identify

54 legislative or policy changes that may enhance the investigation and prosecution of unsolved
55 homicides. The task force shall also provide training and technical assistance to local law
56 enforcement agencies on unsolved homicide investigations.

57 (e) The task force shall submit an annual report to the governor, the president of the
58 senate, the speaker of the house of representatives, and the chairs of the joint committee on
59 public safety and homeland security on or before December 31 of each year. The report shall
60 include, but not be limited to, the following information: (i) the number of unsolved homicides in
61 the commonwealth; (ii) the number of unsolved homicide cases reviewed and pursued by the
62 teams; (iii) the number of arrests, indictments, convictions, and acquittals resulting from the
63 work of the teams; (iv) the challenges and barriers faced by the teams in investigating and
64 prosecuting unsolved homicides; (v) the recommendations for improving the effectiveness and
65 efficiency of the task force and its teams; and (vi) any other information deemed relevant by the
66 task force.

67 Section 184C. (a) There shall be a state-wide database of unsolved homicides, hereinafter
68 referred to as the database, to collect, store, and share information on all homicides that remain
69 unsolved in the commonwealth. The database shall be maintained by the attorney general's office
70 in collaboration with the statewide unsolved homicides task force established under section
71 184B.

72 (b) The database shall include, but not be limited to, the following information for each
73 unsolved homicide case: (i) the name, age, gender, race, and other identifying characteristics of
74 the victim; (ii) the date, time, location, and manner of death; (iii) the cause and nature of the
75 injuries; (iv) the status and history of the investigation; (v) any physical evidence, forensic

76 analysis, or DNA profiles; (vi) any suspects, persons of interest, witnesses, or informants; (vii)
77 any rewards offered or tips received; and (viii) any other information deemed relevant by the
78 attorney general or the task force.

79 (c) The attorney general shall establish rules and regulations for the operation and
80 administration of the database, including but not limited to: (i) the criteria and procedures for
81 entering, updating, verifying, and deleting data; (ii) the standards and protocols for ensuring the
82 accuracy, security, and confidentiality of data; (iii) the criteria and procedures for accessing,
83 searching, and retrieving data; (iv) the criteria and procedures for sharing and exchanging data
84 with other law enforcement agencies, criminal justice entities, or authorized persons; and (v) the
85 criteria and procedures for reporting and auditing data.

86 (d) The attorney general shall ensure that the database is compatible and interoperable
87 with other existing or future databases related to unsolved homicides, such as those maintained
88 by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the National Institute of Justice or other states.

89 (e) The attorney general shall submit an annual report to the governor, the president of
90 the senate, the speaker of the house of representatives, and the chairs of the joint committee on
91 public safety and homeland security on or before December 31 of each year. The report shall
92 include, but not be limited to, the following information: (i) the number and characteristics of
93 unsolved homicide cases entered into the database; (ii) the number and characteristics of
94 unsolved homicide cases solved or cleared with the assistance of the database; (iii) the number
95 and characteristics of unsolved homicide cases shared or exchanged with other databases or
96 agencies; (iv) the challenges and barriers faced by the attorney general or the task force in
97 maintaining and utilizing the database; (v) the recommendations for improving the effectiveness

98 and efficiency of the database; and (vi) any other information deemed relevant by the attorney
99 general or the task force.

100 Section 184D. (a) There shall be established and set up on the books of the
101 commonwealth a separate fund to be known as the Unsolved Homicides Task Force Fund,
102 hereinafter referred to as the fund. The fund shall consist of revenues collected by the
103 commonwealth from the following sources: (i) any federal grants or awards received by the
104 commonwealth for the purpose of investigating and prosecuting unsolved homicides; (ii) any
105 private donations or contributions made to the commonwealth for the purpose of investigating
106 and prosecuting unsolved homicides; (iii) any funds appropriated by the general court for the
107 purpose of investigating and prosecuting unsolved homicides; (iv) any interest earned on such
108 revenues; (v) and an annual 15% payment of all asset forfeiture funds from each district attorney.

109 (b) The fund shall be administered by the attorney general, who shall serve as the trustee
110 of the fund. The attorney general shall expend such amounts from the fund as he or she deems
111 necessary to support the operations and activities of the statewide unsolved homicides task force
112 established under section 184B of chapter 6 of the General Laws. The attorney general shall also
113 seek to maximize the amount of federal funding available for the task force by applying for
114 grants and awards from various federal agencies, including but not limited to, the Office for
115 Victims of Crime, the National Institute of Justice, the Office of Justice Programs, and the
116 Department of the Interior.

117 (c) The attorney general shall submit an annual report to the governor, the president of
118 the senate, the speaker of the house of representatives, and the chairs of the joint committee on
119 public safety and homeland security on or before December 31 of each year. The report shall

120 include, but not be limited to, the following information: (i) the amount and source of revenues
121 deposited into the fund; (ii) the amount and purpose of expenditures made from the fund; (iii) the
122 status and outcome of any federal grant or award applications submitted by or on behalf of the
123 task force; and (iv) any other information deemed relevant by the attorney general.

124 SECTION 3. Not later than June 30, 2026, the comptroller shall transfer $10,000,000
125 from the General Fund to the Unsolved Homicides Task Force Fund established in section 184D
126 of chapter 6 of the General Laws.