

SENATE No.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PRESENTED BY:

Sal N. DiDomenico

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 a Massachusetts children’s cabinet.

PETITION OF:

NAME:

Sal N. DiDomenico

DISTRICT/ADDRESS:

Middlesex and Suffolk

SENATE No.

[Pin Slip]

[SIMILAR MATTER FILED IN PREVIOUS SESSION
SEE SENATE, NO. 79 OF 2023-2024.]

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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

An Act establishing a Massachusetts children’s cabinet.

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 6A of the General Laws, as appearing in the 2022 Official Edition, is hereby
2 amended by adding, after section 16FF, the following section:-

3 Section 16GG. There shall be established within the executive office of the governor a
4 children's cabinet. The cabinet shall include, but not be limited to: the secretary of administration
5 and finance; the secretary of health and human services; the secretary of education; the secretary
6 of labor and workforce development; the commissioner of the department of children, and
7 families; the secretary of the department of housing and community development; the
8 commissioner of the department of youth services; the commissioner of the department of
9 transitional assistance; the commissioner of the department of mental health, the commissioner
10 of the department of public health; the commissioner of the department of early education and
11 care; the commissioner of the department of elementary and secondary education; the

12 commissioner of the department of higher education; the commissioner of the department of
13 development services; the director of the office of the child advocate; and the assistant secretary
14 of health and human services for MassHealth; The cabinet shall be co-chaired by the secretary of
15 health and human services and the secretary of education.

16 (a) The cabinet shall ensure that the public policy of the Commonwealth relating to
17 children and youth is developed to promote interdepartmental collaboration and program
18 implementation in order that services designed for children and youth are planned, managed, and
19 delivered in a holistic and integrated manner to improve the children's self-sufficiency, safety,
20 economic stability, health, and quality of life. The cabinet shall:

21 i. Develop and implement a shared and cohesive vision using integrated services to
22 improve child, youth, and family outcomes, including but not limited to issues relating to child
23 poverty, educational preparedness, mental health, homelessness, foster care, juvenile justice, and
24 the health, safety and welfare of children.

25 ii. Develop a strategic plan to achieve the goals of the shared and cohesive vision. The
26 plan shall be centered upon a long-term commitment to children and youth issues and align all
27 public resources to serve children and youth and their families in a manner that supports the
28 healthy growth and development of children. The plan shall include a continuum of services that
29 will benefit children from prenatal care through services for youth in transition to adulthood.

30 iii. Develop and implement measurable outcomes for each state department, agency, and
31 program that are consistent with the strategic plan. The cabinet shall establish a baseline
32 measurement for each outcome and regularly report on the progress made toward achieving the
33 desired outcome.

34 iv. Design and implement actions that will promote collaboration, creativity, increased
35 efficiency, information sharing, and improved service delivery between and within state
36 governmental organizations that provide services for children and youth and their families and
37 shall include the long-range planning process mandated by clause ii.

38 v. Recommend improvements to existing services and programs, as well as new programs
39 to meet unmet needs, based on data on current levels of use and outcomes wherever possible and
40 recommending evidence-based programs wherever possible and appropriate.

41 vi. Foster public awareness of children and youth issues and develop new partners in the
42 effort to serve children and youth.

43 vii Create a children and youth impact statement for evaluating proposed legislation,
44 requested appropriations, and programs. The impact statement shall be shared with the
45 legislature.

46 viii. Identify existing and potential funding streams and resources for children’s services,
47 including, but not limited to, public funding, foundation and organization grants, and other forms
48 of private funding opportunities, including public-private partnerships.

49 ix. Develop a children and youth-based budget structure and nomenclature that includes
50 all relevant departments, funding streams, and programs. The budget shall facilitate improved
51 coordination and efficiency, explore options for and allow maximization of federal financial
52 participation, and implement the state’s vision and strategic plan.

53 x. Engage in other activities that will implement improved collaboration of agencies in
54 order to create, manage, and promote coordinated policies, programs, and service delivery
55 systems that support children and youth.

56 (b) The governor shall appoint an advisory committee that shall meet not less than four
57 times a year and jointly with the children’s cabinet not less than two times a year. The advisory
58 committee shall provide data-driven recommendations to address service gaps and regional
59 equity concerns and will shall provide recommendations on coordinating services across the
60 state. Members shall include the house and senate chairs of the joint committee on children,
61 families and persons with disabilities, 6-4 representatives from family resource centers including
62 representatives from the western, central, and southeastern regions of the state; the executive
63 director of the children’s trust fund or their designee; the executive director of the
64 parent/professional action league or their designee; the executive director of the center for health
65 information and analysis or their designee; the director of the department of family and medical
66 leave or their designee; a member of the Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Commission; the
67 director of the Massachusetts cultural council or their designee; the executive director of the
68 GLBTQ Legal Advocates & Defenders or their designee; the president of the Baker Center for
69 Children and Families or their designee; the executive director of the Disability Law Center or
70 their designee; an executive director of a non-profit child welfare agency; and an additional 5
71 members with backgrounds including, but not limited to, pediatricians or other health care
72 professionals servicing children, early childhood educators, teachers, school administrators,
73 parents, youth, and other relevant experts with attention to diversity reflecting the composition of
74 the child population. The governor shall designate one of the members of the advisory committee
75 to serve as chair.

76 (c) The children's cabinet shall, by November 1 of each year, provide an annual report
77 concerning its activities, the status of children and youth in the commonwealth, and progress
78 towards achieving the goals outlined in this section to the governor, the legislature and the
79 public. The report shall be filed with the clerks of the house of representatives and senate, the
80 house and senate chairs of the joint committee on children, families and persons with disabilities;
81 the joint committee on education; the joint committee on higher education; the joint committee
82 on mental health and substance abuse; the joint committee on public health; the joint committee
83 on health care financing and the house and senate committees on ways and means.

84 (d) The executive office of the governor shall provide administrative support and service
85 to the cabinet. The cabinet shall meet at least four times each year and may solicit input from the
86 public and any other individual offering testimony relevant to the issues considered. Each
87 meeting must include a public comment session.