

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

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**The Commonwealth of Massachusetts**

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PRESENTED BY:

***Rebecca L. Rausch***

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*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 ensure a complete, accurate, and equitable census count.

\_\_\_\_\_

PETITION OF:

NAME:

*Rebecca L. Rausch*

DISTRICT/ADDRESS:

*Norfolk, Worcester and Middlesex*

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

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[Pin Slip]

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[SIMILAR MATTER FILED IN PREVIOUS SESSION  
SEE SENATE, NO. 432 OF 2023-2024.]

**The Commonwealth of Massachusetts**

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

An Act to ensure a complete, accurate, and equitable census count.

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

1           The General Laws, as appearing in the 2022 Official Edition, are hereby amended by  
2 inserting after chapter 57 the following new chapter:-

3           Chapter 57A – Census Equity and Accuracy

4           Section 1. For purposes of this chapter, the following words shall have the following  
5 meanings:

6           “Census day”, the day by which residents in the United States must be counted, as set  
7 forth in title 13 of the United States Code.

8           “Commission”, the Massachusetts census equity commission.

9           “Persons experiencing homelessness”, individuals who lack, or are perceived to lack, a  
10 fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence. Persons experiencing homelessness includes,  
11 but is not limited to, persons who: (1) share the housing of other persons due to loss of housing,  
12 economic hardship or a similar reason; (2) live in motels, hotels, trailer parks or campgrounds  
13 due to the lack of fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence; (3) live in emergency or  
14 transitional shelters; (4) are abandoned in hospitals; (5) are awaiting foster care placement; (6)  
15 have a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily  
16 used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings; (7) live in cars, parks, public  
17 spaces, abandoned buildings, bus or train stations or similar settings; or (8) are transient and  
18 otherwise experiencing homelessness as described in this subsection.

19           “Undercounted communities”, groups of residents of the commonwealth who are  
20 traditionally undercounted in census implementations, including but not limited to: (1)  
21 communities of color; (2) immigrants, regardless of documentation; (3) individuals of all gender  
22 identities, gender presentations, and sexual orientations; (4) individuals with incomes under  
23 200% of the federal poverty line; (5) persons experiencing homeless; (6) individuals with  
24 disabilities; (7) individuals who are veterans; (8) individuals under the age of 16 years; (9)  
25 individuals for whom English is not their first language; (10) residents of rural communities; and  
26 (11) residents of subsidized housing.

27           Section 2. (a) There is hereby established, within the office of the state secretary, the  
28 Massachusetts census equity commission. The purpose of the commission shall be to ensure that  
29 Massachusetts censuses accurately and completely count all residents of the commonwealth,  
30 including but not limited to undercounted communities.

31 (b) The commission shall consist of 29 members, as follows: the secretary of state, or  
32 designee, who shall serve as chair; the attorney general, or designee; the Senate chair of the  
33 committee on election laws; the House chair of the committee on redistricting; the Senate  
34 minority leader, or designee; the House minority leader, or designee; a Senate member of the  
35 Black and Latino Legislative Caucus; a House member of the Asian Legislative Caucus; the  
36 commissioner of the department of elementary and secondary education, or designee; the  
37 commissioner of the office of refugees and immigrants, or designee; a member of the Boston city  
38 council, selected by majority vote of the council; a member of the Worcester city council,  
39 selected by majority vote of the council; a member of the Springfield city council, selected by  
40 majority vote of the council; a member of the Lowell city council, selected by majority vote of  
41 the council; a member of the New Bedford city council, selected by majority vote of the council;  
42 a member of the Barnstable town council, selected by majority vote of the council; a member of  
43 the Greenfield town council, selected by majority vote of the council; the executive director of  
44 the Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition; a representative of the Grove  
45 Hall Safe Neighborhood Initiative; the executive director of the Massachusetts Coalition for the  
46 Homeless; 4 members appointed by the speaker of the house of representatives who shall be  
47 residents of the Commonwealth, 2 of whom shall represent faith communities of color in the  
48 commonwealth, 1 of whom shall represent minority and women-owned businesses in the  
49 commonwealth, and 1 of whom shall be a member of the Wampanoag tribe; and 5 members  
50 appointed by the president of the senate who shall be residents of the Commonwealth, 1 of  
51 whom shall represent youth residents of the commonwealth, 1 of whom shall represent older  
52 adult residents of the commonwealth, 1 of whom shall be a veteran, 1 of whom shall represent  
53 individuals with disabilities, and 1 of whom shall represent tenants and renters. Appointments

54 shall promote diverse geographic, cultural, ethnic, racial, and gender representation on the  
55 commission.

56 Section 3. (a) The commission shall develop and implement census outreach programs to:  
57 increase awareness of the census, focusing efforts in undercounted communities; educate  
58 residents of the commonwealth about the importance of an accurate census count; alleviate  
59 concerns about perceived repercussions for participating in the census count; and engage  
60 undercounted communities in the census counting process.

61 (b) The census outreach programs shall take into account barriers to proper counting of  
62 all residents of the commonwealth.

63 (c) The census outreach programs shall include communications to residents of the  
64 commonwealth through school-based programs, partnerships with non-profit and community-  
65 based programs, and a multi-lingual, multi-media, multi-platform campaign.

66 (d) For purposes of implementing the census outreach programs, the commission shall  
67 solicit participation from relevant experts and practitioners as necessary to achieve the goals set  
68 forth in subsection (a) of this section; and may create and appoint working groups as it deems  
69 appropriate.

70 Section 4. The commission shall be coordinated through the office of the secretary of  
71 state which shall provide administrative support to the commission and coordinate with state  
72 agencies and constitutional officers, as well as units of local government, to identify effective  
73 methods of outreach and to provide resources to ensure that outreach programs are successful  
74 and all residents are counted.

75           Section 5. (a) Members of the commission shall serve four-year terms, provided that no  
76 term shall terminate within the 24-month period prior to a census day or the 6-month period  
77 subsequent to a census day.

78           (b) Members of the commission shall receive no compensation for their services but may  
79 be reimbursed for expenses incurred in the course of their service on the commission.

80           (c) The commission may employ a director and assistant director upon a simple majority  
81 vote of the full membership of the commission. The director and assistant director may be  
82 compensated from moneys appropriated or available for that purpose.

83           Section 6. Vacancies on the commission shall be filled in like manner as the original  
84 appointment.

85           Section 7. (a) During the 24-month period prior to a census day, the commission shall  
86 meet at least monthly, or more frequently at the call of the chair or by majority vote of the  
87 members.

88           (b) At all times other than the period set forth in subsection (a) of this section, the  
89 commission shall meet at least quarterly, or more frequently at the call of the chair or by majority  
90 vote of the members.

91           (c) To the extent practicable, the commission shall rotate meeting locations throughout  
92 every region of the commonwealth.

93           Section 8. The secretary of the commonwealth shall use all reasonable efforts to secure  
94 federal funding for implementation of the census outreach programs. At least forty percent of the

95 funds spent implementing the census outreach programs must be spent on undercounted  
96 communities.

97 Section 9. (a) Not later than June 1 in the odd-numbered year immediately preceding a  
98 census day, the commission shall file with the governor, the secretary of the commonwealth, the  
99 attorney general, and the general court joint committees on election laws and redistricting, an  
100 interim report containing: (1) its proposed census outreach programs to encourage full  
101 participation and avoid an undercount in the upcoming decennial census; and (2) any  
102 recommendations for regulatory or legislative action necessary to ensure an accurate count of all  
103 Massachusetts residents in the upcoming decennial census.

104 (b) The general court joint committees on election laws and redistricting may, separately  
105 or collectively, issue to the commission suggestions for improvements to the proposed census  
106 outreach programs contained in the interim report. The committees may, separately or  
107 collectively, hold public hearings in advance of preparing and issuing said suggestions. Any  
108 suggestions must be issued to the commission by November 1 in the odd-numbered year  
109 immediately preceding a census day.

110 (c) Not later than December 10 in the odd-numbered year immediately preceding a  
111 census day, the committee shall file with the governor, the secretary of the commonwealth, the  
112 attorney general, and the general court joint committees on election laws and redistricting, a final  
113 report containing the census outreach programs to be implemented throughout the  
114 commonwealth.

115 (d) Not later than February 1 in the odd-numbered year immediately subsequent to a  
116 census day, the committee shall file with the governor, the secretary of the commonwealth, the

117 attorney general, and the legislative committees on election laws and redistricting, a post-  
118 implementation report containing: (1) a detailed accounting of the census outreach programs  
119 implemented for the immediately prior decennial census; (2) an assessment of the perceived  
120 levels of success of the components of the census outreach programs; (3) recommendations for  
121 improvements in the next census outreach programs, including in the commission's discretion  
122 appropriate recommended legislative or regulatory action; and (4) other notable outcomes of the  
123 commission's work.

124 (e) The commission may update its post-implementation report as appropriate, in its  
125 discretion, until December 31 in the second odd-numbered year subsequent to a census day.