

SENATE No.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PRESENTED BY:

Julian Cyr

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 relative to the closing of hospital essential services.

PETITION OF:

NAME:

Julian Cyr

DISTRICT/ADDRESS:

Cape and Islands

SENATE No.

[Pin Slip]

[SIMILAR MATTER FILED IN PREVIOUS SESSION
SEE SENATE, NO. 736 OF 2023-2024.]

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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

An Act relative to the closing of hospital essential services.

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 51G of chapter 111 of the General Laws, as appearing in the 2022
2 Official Edition, is hereby amended by striking subsection (4) and inserting in place thereof the
3 following section:

4 (4)(a) A hospital shall notify the department of a proposed closure at least one calendar
5 year in advance of the date of the proposed closure or discontinuance of an essential health
6 service.

7 (b) At least 30 days prior to notifying the department of the proposed closure or
8 discontinuance of an essential health service, the hospital shall inform either electronically or in
9 writing the Department and the following parties of its intent to submit notice to close a service:

10 (a) The hospital’s patient and family council; (b) Each staff member of the hospital; (c) Every
11 labor organization that represents the hospital’s workforce during the period of the essential

12 services closure; (d) The members of the General Court who represent the city or town in which
13 the hospital is located; and; (e) A representative of the local officials of the city or town in which
14 the hospital is located. The department shall define essential services according to 105 CMR 130.

15 (c) At least 30 days prior to notifying the department of the proposed closure of an
16 essential health service, a detailed account of any community engagement and planning which
17 has occurred prior to such filing, and such other information as the Commissioner may require
18 shall be presented to the department. With respect to the proposed closure of an essential health
19 service, the hospital shall also send a copy of the notice that it submits to the Department to the
20 Health Policy Commission, Office of the Attorney General, Center for Health Information and
21 Analysis, and Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development as well as each of the
22 health care coalitions and community groups identified by the hospital in its notice to the
23 department.

24 (d) The hospital proposing the discontinuance shall provide, with their initial notice to the
25 department, evidence of support or non-opposition to the proposed change from each
26 municipality to which it provides the service as a health care resource, as determined pursuant to
27 section 16T of chapter 6A of the General Laws, or, if a statement of non-opposition cannot be
28 obtained, evidence of having given notice and allowed an opportunity for comment from said
29 municipalities. Any information given without meeting the requirements of this paragraph shall
30 not constitute notice to the department for the purpose of establishing the earliest date on which
31 the hospital may close or discontinue an essential health service.

32 (e) The department shall, in the event that a hospital proposes to discontinue an essential
33 health service or services, determine whether any such discontinued services are necessary for

34 preserving access and health status in the hospital's service area, require the hospital to submit a
35 plan for assuring access to such necessary services following the hospital's closure of the
36 service, and assure continuing access to such services in the event that the department determines
37 that their closure will significantly reduce access to necessary services. This plan shall include
38 the creation of a community oversight committee comprised of a representative from each
39 municipality to which the hospital provides the service as a health care resource as well as non-
40 managerial employees, including registered nurses and ancillary staff, from the hospital, and a
41 representative from a local interfaith organization to ensure that any plan approved by the
42 department is followed. The community oversight group shall inform the department in the event
43 the plan is not executed and followed by the hospital. If the hospital's plan for assuring
44 continued access to a necessary service relies upon the availability of similar services at another
45 hospital or health facility with which it does not share common ownership, the department shall
46 require the hospital to submit with said plan a statement from each other hospital or health
47 facility listed in the plan, affirming their capacity to provide continued access as described in the
48 plan. The department shall conduct a public hearing prior to a determination on the closure of
49 said essential services or of the hospital. No original license shall be granted to establish or
50 maintain an acute-care hospital, as defined by section 25B, unless the applicant submits a plan, to
51 be approved by the department, for the provision of community benefits, including the
52 identification and provision of essential health services. In approving the plan, the department
53 may take into account the applicants existing commitment to primary and preventive health care
54 services and community contributions as well as the primary and preventive health care services
55 and community contributions of the predecessor hospital. The department may waive this
56 requirement, in whole or in part, at the request of the applicant which has provided or at the time

57 the application is filed, is providing, substantial primary and preventive health care services and
58 community contributions in its service area.

59 (f) If a hospital executes a plan to discontinue an essential health service, said plan not
60 having been approved by the department pursuant to this section, the Attorney General shall seek
61 an injunction to require that the essential health service be maintained for the duration of the
62 notice period outlined in paragraph (a) of this section. Additionally, that hospital shall not be
63 eligible to have an application approved pursuant to section 25C for a period of three years from
64 the date the service is discontinued, or until the essential health service is restored, or until such
65 time as the department is satisfied that a plan is in place that, at the time of the discontinuance,
66 would have met the requirements of paragraph (c).

67 (g) To preserve access to essential services, hospitals shall not close any beds, units or
68 facilities for the duration of any declared state of emergency pertaining to health care.