

Joint Committee on Public Safety and Homeland Security

Bill Summary

<u>BILL NUMBER</u>	House, No. 2732
<u>TITLE</u>	An Act relative to missing Black women and girls in Massachusetts
<u>SPONSORS</u>	Representatives Williams of Springfield, Tyler of Boston, and Kushmerek of Fitchburg
<u>HEARING DATE:</u>	THURSDAY, JULY 24TH at 1:00 PM in A2

SUMMARY

Section 1: The General Court finds necessary legislative measures to protect Black women and girls. These measures include

- 1) Establishing an executive office of missing and murdered black women and girls to coordinate efforts to disrupt systemic harms of black women and girls.
- 2) Establishing a permanent community-based advisory group on missing black women and girls.
- 3) Establishing an Ebony alert notification system.
- 4) Collect data about missing persons and homicide cases involving black women and girls, ebony alerts, case management, and best practices.

Section 2: Amending MGL 6 by adding Section 222:

- (a) In the executive office of public safety, there shall be an office of missing and murdered black women and girls designed to prevent the targeting of this group.
- (b) The secretary will appoint an executive director who is closely connected to the black community and familiar with investigative procedures.
- (c) The office will have the following duties:
 - (1) Collect data on missing and murdered black women and girls and compare the rate of time the case is open and whether it is solved with the information available for other ethnic groups.
 - (2) Collect and compare Amber Alerts and bony Alerts and factoring in the Amber alerts that relate to black women and girls.
 - (3) Collect data on reports of missing black women and girls, including those considered voluntary runaways, and compare the data to other ethnic groups.
 - (4) Analyze the data and assess the intersection with human and sex trafficking.
 - (5) Develop recommendations for legislative and other actions to address the trafficking problems.
 - (6) Analyze and assess the data on missing and murdered black women and girls arising from domestic violence. Noting the history of an offender and whether the offender has a firearm.
 - (7) Develop recommendations for legislative or other action as a result of analyzing data on domestic violence and missing and murdered black women and girls.
 - (8) Develop tools to measure the impact of the office.
 - (9) Track and collect data on missing and murdered black women and girls and post the information on the office website.
 - (10) Conduct case reviews on missing and murdered black women and girls, including cold cases and where suicide or suspicious circumstances are involved.

(11) Conduct case reviews of missing and murdered black women and girls where the perpetrator of the crime is identified and determine whether the perpetrator is a repeat offender.

(12) Prepare and draft legislation as necessary.

(13) Maintain communication with all relevant agencies regarding missing and murdered black women and girls and develop investigative procedures.

(14) Consult with the advisory committee on missing and murdered black women and girls.

(15) Coordinate with federal agencies and neighboring states.

(16) Develop recommendations for legislative and agency action.

(d) The office shall prepare an annual report by January 15, which will assess the success of office actions, goals for the coming year, and a study of the metrics in support of successful actions.

(e) Subject to appropriations, the office may issue grants to prevent the targeting of black women and girls.

(1) Provide services designed to prevent crimes targeting black women and girls.

(2) Provide training to eliminate crimes targeting black women and girls.

(3) Provide services to black women girls and their families who are the victims of crime targeting black women and girls.

(f) Notwithstanding any special or general law, the director of the office shall have access to all information, public or confidential, necessary to perform the duties of the office.

(g) Within the office of missing or murdered black women or children, there will be an independent commission. Annually the commission will report:

(1) The systemic cause behind violence against black women and girls.

(2) Appropriate methods for tracking and collecting data.

(3) The coordination and collection of data regarding missing black women and girls, ebony alerts, and case management of referral services.

(4) Coordinate with law enforcement on the ebony alert system.

(5) Policies and institutions and governmental practices that impact violence against black women and girls including the prosecution of crimes of gender and violence.

(6) Measures to reduce violence against black women and girls.

(7) Measures to help victims heal from crimes against black women and girls.

At its discretion, the task force may examine other related issues as necessary.

The task force membership makeup is specifically defined, as are meetings and meeting spaces.

Section 3: Chapter 22C of the General laws is amended by inserting a new section.

Section 71A: (a) Ebony Alert is a notification system designed to issue and coordinate alerts with respect to Black Youth including young black women and girls who are reported missing under unusual circumstances.

(b) a person reported missing to a law enforcement agency, where the agency determines the qualifications of section (c) are met and the department concurs an Ebony alert will be issued in the geographic areas requested by the investigating law enforcement agency.

(c) a law enforcement agency may request an Ebony alert be issued after considering the following factors:

(1) the missing person is between 12 and 25 inclusive.

(2) the missing person has a disability.

(3) the person is missing under circumstances such as:

(a) their physical safety may be endangered.

(b) the missing person's disappearance does not appear voluntary.

(c) the person may be subject to trafficking.

(4) a law enforcement agency determines the person is missing under unexplained circumstances.

(5) a law enforcement agency believes the person to be in danger due to age, health, disability, environmental circumstances, or that the missing person is in the company of a person deemed dangerous.

(6) the investigating law enforcement has utilized local resources.

(7) public information may assist in the safe recovery of the missing person.

(d) Pursuant to a request for an Ebony alert the law enforcement agency and the department shall activate an Ebony alert and notify broadcast media serving an established statewide Ebony alert system. Information used to alert the public will not be part of the public domain nor become part of a public record.

(e) The department will develop rules and regulations necessary to implement this section.