

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

JOURNAL OF THE HOUSE.



THURSDAY, MAY 7, 2026.

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JOURNAL OF THE HOUSE.

Thursday, May 7, 2026.

Met according to adjournment at eleven o'clock A.M., in an Informal Session, with Mr. Donato of Medford in the Chair (having been appointed by the Speaker, under authority conferred by Rule 5, to perform the duties of the Chair).

At the request of the Chair (Mr. Donato), the members, guests and employees joined with him in reciting the pledge of allegiance to the flag.

Pledge of
allegiance.

Silent Tribute.

During the session (Mr. Donato of Medford being in the Chair), at the request of Mr. Biele of Boston, the members, guests and employees stood in a moment of silent tribute in respect to the memory of Phyllis Simon of South Boston, who passed away surrounded by family.

Phyllis
Simon.

A dedicated public servant, Phyllis helped guide generations of young people throughout her professional career in education. Outside the classroom, she was a passionate advocate for her school and her community. Through her dedication and service, Phyllis had a lasting and positive impact on countless youth and their families.

Beloved wife of the late Sarkis Simon (United States Army Vietnam Veteran), devoted mother to Amanda, Alexandra, Rebecca and Roopen, sister of Arthur, Paul and Steven, she is survived by her grandchildren Luke, Tate, Olivia, Bennett, Margo, Maximus, Camille and Elle.

Guests of the House.

At the beginning of the session, the Chair (Mr. Donato of Medford), declared a brief recess and introduced, seated in the Chamber, third grade students from East Brookfield Elementary School, accompanied by Sandra Chonmany, Carolyn Bressette and Ed Carey. At the invitation of the Chair, the students participated in the pledge of allegiance to the flag. They were the guests of Representative Berthiaume of Spencer.

East Brookfield
Elementary
School.

Resolutions.

The following resolutions (filed with the Clerk) were referred, under Rule 85, to the committee on Rules:

Resolutions (filed by Representatives Muradian of Grafton and Frost of Auburn) commending all individuals and families throughout the Commonwealth honoring May 14, 2026 as Apraxia Awareness Day; and

Apraxia
Awareness
Day.

Resolutions (filed by Representatives Roy of Franklin and Soter of Bellingham) congratulating Gavin Tramontozzi on achieving the rank of Eagle Scout of Scouting America;

Gavin
Tramontozzi.

Mr. Galvin of Canton, for the committee on Rules, reported, in each instance, that the resolutions ought to be adopted. Under suspension of the rules, in each instance, on motion of Ms. Badger of Plymouth, the resolutions (reported by the committee on Bills in the Third Reading to be correctly drawn) were considered forthwith; and they were adopted.

Petitions.

Petitions severally were presented and referred as follows:

By Representative Jones of North Reading and Senator Crighton, a joint petition (accompanied by bill, House, No. 5416) of Bradley H. Jones, Jr., and Brendan P. Crighton (by vote of the town) that the town of Lynnfield be authorized to appropriate funds for certain large and long term capital projects in said town. To the committee on Municipalities and Regional Government.

Lynnfield,—
capital
projects.

By Representative Jones of North Reading and Senator Crighton, a joint petition (accompanied by bill, House, No. 5417) of Bradley H. Jones, Jr., and Brendan P. Crighton (by vote of the town) that the town of Lynnfield be authorized to impose a local sales tax upon restaurant meals originating within said town; and

Lynnfield,—
sales tax.

By Representative Lipper-Garabedian of Melrose, a petition (accompanied by bill, House, No. 5418) of Kate Lipper-Garabedian (by vote of the town) that the town of Wakefield be authorized to establish a means tested senior citizen property tax exemption in said town.

Wakefield,—
tax exemption.

Severally to the committee on Revenue.
Severally sent to the Senate for concurrence.

Papers from the Senate.

A petition (accompanied by bill) of Joan B. Lovely for legislation relative to animal telehealth, came from the Senate referred, under suspension of Joint Rule 12, to the committee on Consumer Protection and Professional Licensure.

Animal
telehealth.

The House then concurred with the Senate in the suspension of said rule; and the petition (accompanied by bill, Senate, No. 3082) was referred, in concurrence, to the committee on Consumer Protection and Professional Licensure.

*Reports of the Special Joint Committee on Initiative Petitions on the Bills
Introduced into the General Court by Initiative Petition.*

By Ms. Peisch of Wellesley, for the special joint committee on Initiative Petitions [reports having been filed in the office of the Clerk subsequent to adjournment of the preceding sitting, on Monday, May 4, 2026]:

An Act to allow single-family homes on small lots in areas with adequate infrastructure (House, No. 5000) (introduced into the General Court by the initiative petition of Andrew B. Mikula and others).

Homes,—
small lots.

The majority report of the committee (House, No. 5401) is as follows:

MAJORITY REPORT.

A majority of the Special Joint Committee on Initiative Petitions
Article 48 of the Amendments to the Constitution of the Commonwealth allows voters to propose laws or constitutional amendments through initiative petitions,

commonly called ballot questions. After gathering the required signatures and submitting certified signatures to the Secretary of the Commonwealth, a petition is formally presented to the Legislature for consideration. It is then referred to a committee, in this case, the Special Joint Committee on Initiative Petitions.

Under Article 48, the committee must report to the Legislature on each petition before the first Wednesday in May. Unlike the standard legislative process, the Legislature may only approve or reject an initiative petition as submitted, without making changes.

The Committee held a hearing on Initiative Petition 25-03, House 5000, *Initiative Petition for a Law to Allow Single-Family Homes on Small Lots in Areas with Adequate Infrastructure* on March 16, 2026. The Special Joint Committee on Initiative Petitions held public hearings throughout March 2026 to gather testimony and inform its review. The Committee considered input from subject matter experts, proponents and opponents of the Petition, as well as members of the public. The full hearing record and supporting documentation is available to the public at malegislature.gov/Events/Hearings/Detail/5597.

On May 4, 2026, a majority of the Special Joint Committee on Initiative Petitions (“the Committee”) voted to recommend that the General Court **take no action** on Initiative Petition 25-03, House 5000, *Initiative Petition for a Law to Allow Single-Family Homes on Small Lots in Areas with Adequate Infrastructure* (“the Petition”).

In reaching this determination, the Committee conducted a comprehensive review of the proposed measure, including a detailed analysis of its language, structure, and intended effect. The Committee evaluated testimony and documentary evidence presented during the public hearing, including input from subject matter experts in housing policy, municipal governance, land use planning, and infrastructure management, as well as statements from proponents, opponents, and members of the public. In addition, the Committee considered the potential legal, administrative, and fiscal implications of the proposal for both the Commonwealth and its municipalities.

The Initiative Petition seeks to permit, as a matter of right, the development of single-family homes on 5,000 square foot lots in areas determined to have adequate infrastructure, notwithstanding existing local zoning requirements. The stated objective of the petition is to increase housing production of small homes, expand the supply of buildable land, and improve housing affordability across the Commonwealth. Opponents question whether the goal of the petition would be realized given the specific language of the petition. For example, they noted ambiguity around size of structures, and a lack of implementation guidance (including how “adequate” infrastructure would be determined), which could result in uneven application across jurisdictions. The Committee recognizes the urgency of the Commonwealth’s housing challenges and the importance of advancing policies that promote the development of diverse, accessible, and attainable homeownership opportunities.

While the Committee supports the overarching goal of expanding housing opportunities and acknowledges the need for bold and effective responses to the Commonwealth’s housing shortage, based on the testimony received and the fact that the legislature cannot by law make any changes to the ballot question as written by the proponents, the Committee cannot support this Petition.

It is important to note that Article 48 of the Amendments to the Massachusetts Constitution, which governs the initiative petition process, requires the Attorney General to provide initial certification of initiative petitions that meet the specific and limited requirements listed in Article 48. In making a decision on whether to initially

certify an initiative petition, the Attorney General does not evaluate a petition’s broader constitutionality; her certification decision is limited only to the narrow criteria listed in Article 48. Thus, this Petition has been certified by the Attorney General under Article 48, but it has not been evaluated by her or the courts for its constitutionality at this time.

For these reasons, a majority of the Committee recommends that the General Court **take no action** on Initiative Petition 25-03, House 5000, *Initiative Petition for a Law to Allow Single-Family Homes on Small Lots in Areas with Adequate Infrastructure*.

Senators.
Cindy F. Friedman
Brendan P. Crighton
Paul R. Feeney
Barry R. Finegold

Representatives.
Alice Hanlon Peisch
Kate Hogan
Frank A. Moran
Michael S. Day
David T. Vieira

An Act relative to election day registration (House, No. 5001)) (introduced into the General Court by the initiative petition of Norma B. Shulman and others).

The majority report of the committee (House, No. 5402) is as follows:

Elections,—
same day
registration.

MAJORITY REPORT.

A majority of the Special Joint Committee on Initiative Petitions

Article 48 of the Amendments to the Constitution of the Commonwealth allows voters to propose laws or constitutional amendments through initiative petitions, commonly called ballot questions. After gathering the required signatures and submitting certified signatures to the Secretary of the Commonwealth, a petition is formally presented to the Legislature for consideration. It is then referred to a committee, in this case, the Special Joint Committee on Initiative Petitions.

Under Article 48, the committee must report to the Legislature on each petition before the first Wednesday in May. Unlike the standard legislative process, the Legislature may only approve or reject an initiative petition as submitted, without making changes.

The Committee held a hearing on Initiative Petition 25-08, House 5001, *Initiative Petition for a Law Relative to Election Day Registration*, on March 31, 2026. The Special Joint Committee on Initiative Petitions held public hearings throughout March 2026 to gather testimony and inform its review. The Committee considered input from subject matter experts, proponents and opponents of the Petition, as well as members of the public. The full hearing record and supporting documentation is available to the public at malegislature.gov/Events/Hearings/Detail/5603.

On May 4, 2026, a majority of the Special Joint Committee on Initiative Petitions (“the Committee”) voted to recommend that the General Court **take no action** on Initiative Petition 25-08, House 5001, *Initiative Petition for a Law Relative to Election Day Registration* (“the Petition”).

In reaching this determination, the Committee conducted a comprehensive review of the proposed measure, including a detailed analysis of its language, structure, and intended effect. The Committee evaluated testimony and supporting evidence presented during the public hearing, as well as supportive written submissions from election officials, policy experts, advocacy organizations, and

members of the public. In addition, potential legal, administrative, and fiscal implications associated with implementing the proposal at both the state and municipal levels were raised along with the identification of staffing and technology infrastructure needs, that testifiers believed were necessary to implement same day registration.

The Petition proposes to establish a system of election day registration, allowing otherwise eligible voters to register and cast a ballot on the same day, including during early voting periods and on election day itself. The Committee recognizes the importance of promoting civic engagement and ensuring broad and equitable access to the electoral process.

The Committee supports ongoing efforts to expand voter access and participation but finds the petition as written (which the Legislature cannot modify) does not adequately address the operational challenges raised by the testimony it received.

It is important to note that Article 48 of the Amendments to the Massachusetts Constitution, which governs the initiative petition process, requires the Attorney General to provide initial certification of initiative petitions that meet the specific and limited requirements listed in Article 48. In making a decision on whether to initially certify an initiative petition, the Attorney General does not evaluate a petition’s broader constitutionality; her certification decision is limited only to the narrow criteria listed in Article 48. Thus, this Petition has been certified by the Attorney General under Article 48, but it has not been evaluated by her or the courts for its constitutionality at this time.

For these reasons, a majority of the Committee recommends that the General Court **take no action** on Initiative Petition 25-08, House 5001, *Initiative Petition for a Law Relative to Election Day Registration*.

Senators.
Cindy F. Friedman
Brendan P. Crighton
Barry R. Finegold

Representatives.
Alice Hanlon Peisch
Kate Hogan
Frank A. Moran
Michael S. Day
David T. Vieira

An Act to restore a sensible marijuana policy (House, No. 5002) (introduced into the General Court by the initiative petition of Angie An-Chi Tso and others).

Marijuana policy.

The majority report of the committee (House, No. 5403) is as follows:

MAJORITY REPORT.

A majority of the Special Joint Committee on Initiative Petitions

Article 48 of the Amendments to the Constitution of the Commonwealth allows voters to propose laws or constitutional amendments through initiative petitions, commonly called ballot questions. After gathering the required signatures and submitting certified signatures to the Secretary of the Commonwealth, a petition is formally presented to the Legislature for consideration. It is then referred to a committee, in this case, the Special Joint Committee on Initiative Petitions.

Under Article 48, the committee must report to the Legislature on each petition before the first Wednesday in May. Unlike the standard legislative process, the Legislature may only approve or reject an initiative petition as submitted, without making changes.

The Committee held a hearing on Initiative Petition 25-10, House 5002, *Initiative Petition for a Law Relative to Regulating Marijuana*, on March 23, 2026. The Special Joint Committee on Initiative Petitions held public hearings throughout March 2026 to gather testimony and inform its review. The Committee considered input from subject matter experts, proponents and opponents of the Petition, as well as members of the public. The full hearing record and supporting documentation is available to the public at malegislature.gov/Events/Hearings/Detail/5602.

On May 4, 2026, a majority of the Special Joint Committee on Initiative Petitions (“the Committee”) voted to recommend that the General Court **take no action** on Initiative Petition 25-10/House 5002, *Initiative Petition for a Law Relative to Regulating Marijuana* (“the Petition”).

In reaching this determination, the Committee conducted a comprehensive review of the proposed measure, including a detailed analysis of its language, structure, and intended effect, and the legal framework it seeks to modify. The Committee also evaluated testimony and documentary evidence presented during the public hearing, along with written submissions from subject matter experts, public health professionals, industry representatives, municipal officials, law enforcement stakeholders, and members of the public. In addition, the Committee considered the potential legal, health, social, and economic implications of the proposal, including its interaction with existing statutes and regulatory structures.

After this review, a majority of the Committee raised substantial concerns regarding the structure, scope, and anticipated impacts of the Initiative Petition. The proposal seeks to modify the 2016 ballot initiative approved by the voters of the Commonwealth that legalized, regulated, and imposed taxation on the retail sale of adult-use recreational marijuana in Massachusetts. The Committee notes that this existing framework represents a comprehensive regulatory system that has been developed over time to balance public health protections, consumer access, and a legal, taxed marketplace for cannabis products.

The Petition introduces significant changes to the Commonwealth’s established cannabis regulatory structure. However, the Committee finds that the proposal lacks sufficient detail regarding implementation and enforcement mechanisms, including how existing regulatory authority would be modified, transferred, or eliminated. This absence of clarity creates legal uncertainty with respect to the continued applicability of current statutes and regulations, as well as the roles of state agencies responsible for oversight of the cannabis industry.

The Committee is further concerned that the proposed changes would remove or substantially alter existing public health and safety safeguards. These include regulatory measures designed to limit youth access to cannabis products, reduce impaired driving risks, and ensure product testing, labeling, and potency standards. Testimony presented to the Committee highlighted concerns that weakening or eliminating these safeguards could increase public health risks and undermine efforts to promote responsible use within a legal market.

In addition, the Petition would have significant implications for licensing, taxation, and the overall structure of the regulated cannabis marketplace. The Committee heard evidence indicating that abrupt changes to the current system could disrupt licensed businesses operating in compliance with existing law, create uncertainty in the investment environment, and affect the stability of both large and small operators in the industry. Testimony also raised concerns with the proposal regarding substantial impacts on state and local revenue streams derived from cannabis taxation and licensing fees, which currently support a range of public programs and local initiatives, as well as the regulatory structure.

Finally, the Committee notes that the transition from a regulated and taxed adult-use market to an alternative legal framework, as contemplated by the Petition, would require extensive administrative planning, regulatory restructuring, and legislative clarification to avoid disruption to enforcement and oversight functions. The majority of the Committee therefore finds that, as drafted, the proposal does not adequately address these operational, fiscal, and public safety considerations.

It is important to note that Article 48 of the Amendments to the Massachusetts Constitution, which governs the initiative petition process, requires the Attorney General to provide initial certification of initiative petitions that meet the specific and limited requirements listed in Article 48. In making a decision on whether to initially certify an initiative petition, the Attorney General does not evaluate a petition's broader constitutionality; her certification decision is limited only to the narrow criteria listed in Article 48. Thus, this Petition has been certified by the Attorney General under Article 48, but it has not been evaluated by her or the courts for its constitutionality at this time.

For these reasons, a majority of the Committee recommends that the General Court **take no action** on Initiative Petition 25-10, House 5002, *Initiative Petition for a Law Relative to Regulating Marijuana*.

Senators.

Cindy F. Friedman
Brendan P. Crighton
Paul R. Feeney
Barry R. Finegold

Representatives.

Alice Hanlon Peisch
Kate Hogan
Frank A. Moran
Michael S. Day
David T. Vieira

An Act to implement all-party state primaries (House, No. 5003) (introduced into the General Court by the initiative petition of Danielle Susan Allen and others). The majority report of the committee (House, No. 5404) is as follows:

State
primaries.

MAJORITY REPORT.

A majority of the Special Joint Committee on Initiative Petitions

Article 48 of the Amendments to the Constitution of the Commonwealth allows voters to propose laws or constitutional amendments through initiative petitions, commonly called ballot questions. After gathering the required signatures and submitting certified signatures to the Secretary of the Commonwealth, a petition is formally presented to the Legislature for consideration. It is then referred to a committee, in this case, the Special Joint Committee on Initiative Petitions.

Under Article 48, the committee must report to the Legislature on each petition before the first Wednesday in May. Unlike the standard legislative process, the Legislature may only approve or reject an initiative petition as submitted, without making changes.

The Committee held a hearing on Initiative Petition 25-12, House 5003, *Initiative Petition for a Law to Implement to All-Party State Primaries*, on March 31, 2026. The Special Joint Committee on Initiative Petitions held public hearings throughout March 2026 to gather testimony and inform its review. The Committee considered input from subject matter experts, proponents and opponents of the Petition, as well as members of the public. The full hearing record and supporting

documentation is available to the public at malegislature.gov/Events/Hearings/Detail/5632.

On May 4, 2026, a majority of the Special Joint Committee on Initiative Petitions (“the Committee”) voted to recommend that the General Court **take no action** on Initiative Petition 25-12, House No. 5003, *Initiative Petition for a Law to Implement to All-Party State Primaries* (“the Petition”).

In reaching this determination, the Committee conducted a comprehensive review of the proposed measure, including a detailed analysis of its language, structure, and intended effect. The Committee evaluated testimony and supporting evidence presented during the public hearing, as well as additional written submissions from election officials, policy experts, advocacy organizations, and members of the public. This testimony raised administrative and fiscal implications of implementing the proposal at both the state and municipal levels, as well as concerns that all-party primaries may result in vote splitting, reduced party accountability, voter confusion, and strategic voting, often disadvantaging less-funded candidates and producing unpredictable or unrepresentative outcomes.

The Petition would reform the Commonwealth’s method for selecting candidates for a general election by removing partisan primaries and instead transitioning to an “all-party” state primary. Under this proposed system, which is also called a “top-two” primary in other jurisdictions that implement a similar structure, candidates for elected office run in a primary election against all of the other candidates for that office, and the candidates who receive the first and second highest number of votes in the primary election are the only candidates to advance to the general election.

The system of a partisan primary election administered by the Commonwealth was implemented in 1911, establishing direct voter nomination of candidates for state offices. This law changed the practice at the time, when each party controlled the method of nominating candidates to represent their party in the general election. The proposed Petition would remove the ability for voters to choose their candidate of choice to represent their preferred party in a general election and would instead ask voters in a primary election to vote for one candidate for that office among all candidates regardless of party affiliation.

The Petition proposes a new system to address the loss of a partisan primary election, whereby candidates for office would be allowed to display their party affiliation on both the primary and general election ballot based on their voter registration, as well as a newly created endorsement by a party or a political designation that also can be listed on the ballot.

The proponents testified that this new endorsement would afford political parties and political designations the ability to have a demonstrative say in the preferred candidates of their party. However, it is important to note that this method does not currently exist for either of the two largest parties by registration in the Commonwealth, the Democratic and Republican parties. Currently, these parties use a convention to formally endorse candidates in statewide elected office, but the party's endorsement does not currently appear as a notation on the ballot in a partisan primary election. As there is no current method or infrastructure for either of the two largest parties to endorse candidates below statewide office, this Petition leaves an open question as to how that would operate and how the endorsement of a party could be secured, as well as the possibility that parties could use an unfair or private process to determine a method for endorsement that could have a major impact on an election, which would be contrary to the 1911 primary election reforms and the stated goals of the proponents.

The proponents posture that this Petition would increase voter participation and increase the number of elected officials from third parties or who are independent from a party. The available evidence does not indicate either of these claims to be accurate. In a study of the impacts of California switching to a “top-two” primary system, evidence shows that turnout in the primary election increased, but conversely, participation in the general election decreased, when comparing both to the previous partisan primary process. In other words, this process had the additional negative effect of decreasing voter participation in general elections in California. Further, a review of the makeup of California and Washington’s state legislatures demonstrate that there are zero members of a third party or who are independent of a party serving as active members, which is less than the current makeup of the Legislature in Massachusetts, which does not use a “top-two” primary system. The proponents stated that Alaska has legislators who are independent of a party, but Alaska uses a “top-four” primary system that is coupled with ranked choice voting for the general election, a total system that combined is vastly different from what the Petition proposes. As written, the implementation of this Petition can lead to general elections where two candidates from just one major party are the only candidates for a voter to choose from, such as two Republican candidates or two Democratic candidates. This has occurred in California, and has been stated as a contributing factor towards the decrease in turnout in general elections.

It is important to note that Article 48 of the Amendments to the Massachusetts Constitution, which governs the initiative petition process, requires the Attorney General to provide initial certification of initiative petitions that meet the specific and limited requirements listed in Article 48. In making a decision on whether to initially certify an initiative petition, the Attorney General does not evaluate a petition’s broader constitutionality; her certification decision is limited only to the narrow criteria listed in Article 48. Thus, this Petition has been certified by the Attorney General under Article 48, but it has not been evaluated by her or the courts for its constitutionality at this time.

For these reasons, a majority of the Committee recommends that the General Court **take no action** on Initiative Petition 25-12, House 5003, *Initiative Petition for a Law to Implement to All-Party State Primaries*.

Senators.
Cindy F. Friedman
Brendan P. Crighton
Paul R. Feeney

Representatives.
Alice Hanlon Peisch
Kate Hogan
Frank A. Moran
Michael S. Day
David T. Vieira

An Act to improve access to public records (House, No. 5004) (introduced into the General Court by the initiative petition of Danielle Susan Allen and others).

The majority report of the committee (House, No. 5405) is as follows:

Public records, — access.

MAJORITY REPORT.

A majority of the Special Joint Committee on Initiative Petitions

Article 48 of the Amendments to the Constitution of the Commonwealth allows voters to propose laws or constitutional amendments through initiative petitions, commonly called ballot questions. After gathering the required signatures and submitting certified signatures to the Secretary of the Commonwealth, a petition is

formally presented to the Legislature for consideration. It is then referred to a committee, in this case, the Special Joint Committee on Initiative Petitions.

Under Article 48, the committee must report to the Legislature on each petition before the first Wednesday in May. Unlike the standard legislative process, the Legislature may only approve or reject an initiative petition as submitted, without making changes.

The Committee held a hearing on Initiative Petition 25-14, House 5004, *Initiative Petition for a Law to Improve Access to Public Records*, on March 3, 2026. The Special Joint Committee on Initiative Petitions held public hearings throughout March 2026 to gather testimony and inform its review. The Committee considered input from subject matter experts, proponents and opponents of the Petition, as well as members of the public. The full hearing record and supporting documentation is available to the public at malegislature.gov/Events/Hearings/Detail/5590.

On May 4, 2026, a majority of the Special Joint Committee on Initiative Petitions (“the Committee”) voted to recommend that the General Court **take no action** on Initiative Petition 25-14, House 5004, *Initiative Petition for a Law to Improve Access to Public Records* (“the Petition”).

This Petition intends to subject the Governor’s office and the Legislature to the public records law under chapters 4 and 66 of the Massachusetts General Laws. The Committee notes that while the Petition would provide two new exemptions to the public records law beyond what currently exists in chapter 4, it was pointed out at the legislative hearing that those additional exemptions may be less helpful than the proponents believe them to be. The proponents stated at the hearing that they offered the new exemptions to avoid legal concerns related to disclosing constituent correspondence and policy development records to the public. However, the new exemption for constituent communications is too narrow to address those legal concerns. The proposed new exemption related to constituent communications covers only specific requests from constituents to legislators for assistance in obtaining government-provided benefits or services or otherwise interacting with a state or federal agency. The new exemption would not cover communications involving constituents who are seeking connection to services that are not run by the state or federal government, such as services provided by a hospital or non-profit organizations. The proposed exemption also would not prevent the disclosure of communications from constituents relating to advocacy for or against specific legislation; that limitation could hinder an individual’s desire to communicate with legislators and suppress their right to petition their government.

With respect to the proposed exemption for records relating to developing policy positions, the proponents made clear at the hearing that the exemption is intended to cover only communications during policy development, and any such exemption expires once the policy is developed. Such an exemption is limited and temporary, and it will chill open communications by lawmakers in a manner that raises significant constitutional concerns, particularly around legislative speech and debate protections.

Contrary to assertions made by proponents, the Committee notes that the legislative process in the Commonwealth is already structured to be publicly accessible. All hearings are conducted in open public sessions, and testimony is accepted from members of the public, advocacy organizations, subject matter experts, and government officials. Legislative sessions, hearings, and committee meetings are publicly noticed and open to the public, and many are live-streamed and archived for later viewing.

In addition, the Massachusetts Legislature provides multiple avenues for public engagement. Bills, amendments, and roll-call votes are published online, enabling residents to track legislation and review how their elected representatives vote. Committee calendars, reports, votes, and related documents are also made publicly available, allowing constituents to follow the progress of legislation through the committee process. These mechanisms collectively ensure a high degree of visibility into the legislative process and opportunities for public participation.

Also, the Committee concludes that the proposed changes may impose substantial administrative burdens on the state, both for compliance and enforcement. State entities would likely need to reallocate staff resources, develop new compliance protocols, and potentially modify existing records management systems in order to meet the requirements of the Petition. These operational demands could divert resources away from other core governmental functions.

In reaching this determination, the Committee reviewed the language and intent of the proposed measure, as well as testimony and evidence presented during the public hearing, which is available on the Committee's website. The Committee recognizes the importance of public access to government records; however, it has significant concerns regarding the Petition's potential operational, legal, and fiscal impacts.

Based on testimony by the experts and from the opponents, the Committee believes that this Petition violates the separation of powers mandated by the Massachusetts Constitution. This Petition would, through law, require the Secretary of the Commonwealth — an officer of the executive branch — to enforce this law against the Senate and House of Representatives in the legislative branch. This would violate the Massachusetts Constitution as it would provide the executive branch with supervisory authority over the legislative branch; such a dramatic shift in authority between the branches of Massachusetts government can only be accomplished through a constitutional amendment, not a new statute.

The Committee knows that the members of the Legislature have a shared commitment to increasing public access to the Legislature, and we look forward to helping increase accessibility through means that avoid the constitutional pitfalls of the present Petition.

It is important to note that Article 48 of the Amendments to the Massachusetts Constitution, which governs the initiative petition process, requires the Attorney General to provide initial certification of initiative petitions that meet the specific and limited requirements listed in Article 48. In making a decision on whether to initially certify an initiative petition, the Attorney General does not evaluate a petition's broader constitutionality; her certification decision is limited only to the narrow criteria listed in Article 48. Thus, this Petition has been certified by the Attorney General under Article 48, but it has not been evaluated by her or the courts for its constitutionality at this time. Nevertheless, the Justices of the Supreme Judicial Court in an advisory opinion issued on April 27, 2026, stated that the Initiative Petition may raise several significant constitutional questions (including whether the Initiative Petition violates the separation of powers), and the Justices reserved consideration of those constitutional concerns for another occasion.

As the Legislature cannot amend this proposal, a majority of the Committee recommends that the General Court **take no action** on Initiative Petition 25-14, House 5004, *Initiative Petition for a Law to Improve Access to Public Records*.

Senators.
Cindy F. Friedman

Representatives.
Alice Hanlon Peisch

Brendan P. Crighton
Paul R. Feeney

Kate Hogan
Frank A. Moran
Michael S. Day
David T. Vieira

The minority report of the committee (House, No. 5414) is as follows:

MINORITY REPORT.

The Legislature has a fundamental responsibility to operate with openness and integrity, and adopting this initiative is a critical step toward fulfilling that obligation. Every executive branch agency and department in the Commonwealth, along with municipal government entities, are required to comply with the public records law, ensuring that residents have access to information about how their government functions. The public entrusts elected officials with significant authority, and with that authority comes the expectation of transparency, accountability, and accessibility. Strengthening public records access would align the Legislature with the practices already adhered to by other state entities. Transparency is not a burden, it is a core feature of good governance, and one that residents should never be denied.

For these reasons, the minority of the Committee recommends that the General Court adopt Initiative Petition 25 14, House 5004, Initiative Petition for a Law to Improve Access to Public Records.

Senator.
Ryan C. Fattman

An Act to protect water and nature (House, No. 5005) (introduced into the General Court by the initiative petition of David John O’Neill and others).

The majority report of the committee (House, No. 5406) is as follows:

Water and
nature,—
protection.

MAJORITY REPORT.

A majority of the Special Joint Committee on Initiative Petitions

Article 48 of the Amendments to the Constitution of the Commonwealth allows voters to propose laws or constitutional amendments through initiative petitions, commonly called ballot questions. After gathering the required signatures and submitting certified signatures to the Secretary of the Commonwealth, a petition is formally presented to the Legislature for consideration. It is then referred to a committee, in this case, the Special Joint Committee on Initiative Petitions.

Under Article 48, the committee must report to the Legislature on each petition before the first Wednesday in May. Unlike the standard legislative process, the Legislature may only approve or reject an initiative petition as submitted, without making changes.

The Committee held a hearing on Initiative Petition 25-15, House 5005, *Initiative Petition for a Law to Protect Water & Nature*, on March 23, 2026. The Special Joint Committee on Initiative Petitions held public hearings throughout March 2026 to gather testimony and inform its review. The Committee considered input from subject matter experts, proponents and opponents of the Petition, as well as members of the public. The full hearing record and supporting documentation is available to the public at malegislature.gov/Events/Hearings/Detail/5601.

On May 4, 2026, a majority of the Special Joint Committee on Initiative Petitions (“the Committee”) voted to recommend that the General Court **take no action** on Initiative Petition 25-15, House 5005, *Initiative Petition for a Law to Protect Water & Nature* (“the Petition”).

In reaching this determination, the Committee conducted a comprehensive review of the proposed measure, including a detailed analysis of its language, structure, and intended effect, as well as testimony and documentary evidence presented at the public hearing. The Committee also considered written submissions from environmental policy experts, state agency representatives, municipal officials, conservation advocates, and members of the public. In addition, the Committee evaluated the potential legal, environmental, administrative, and economic implications of the Initiative Petition, including its interaction with existing statutory authorities governing land conservation, water resource management, and capital planning.

A majority of the Committee has raised concerns regarding the structure, scope, and potential impacts of the Petition as drafted. While proponents of the measure assert that it is designed to be financially neutral and does not constitute a tax increase, the Committee notes that the proposal would rely on existing state revenue streams that are currently allocated to other ongoing programs and priorities. As a result, implementation of the measure would require the reallocation or reduction of funds presently directed toward other state initiatives, including investments administered through agencies such as the Department of Conservation and Recreation. This raises questions of opportunity costs and the potential displacement of existing infrastructure and environmental funding priorities.

The Committee also noted the inclusion of the phrase “subject to appropriations” within the Petition. Under Article 48 of the Amendments to the Massachusetts Constitution, ballot initiatives may not directly appropriate funds. Accordingly, even if approved by the voters, the measure would not itself compel the expenditure of funds but would instead operate within the Commonwealth’s existing budgetary process, in which the Legislature retains exclusive authority over appropriations decisions. This constitutional framework ensures that funding decisions remain subject to annual budget deliberation and fiscal prioritization. As such, passage of this Petition would neither guarantee additional funding nor materially change the status quo.

The Committee recognizes the importance of protecting water resources, preserving natural ecosystems, and supporting long-term environmental sustainability across the Commonwealth. However, after careful consideration, a majority of the Committee concludes that the Petition, as written, raises questions regarding fiscal impacts, programmatic displacement, and constraints on administrative flexibility.

It is important to note that Article 48 of the Amendments to the Massachusetts Constitution, which governs the initiative petition process, requires the Attorney General to provide initial certification of initiative petitions that meet the specific and limited requirements listed in Article 48. In making a decision on whether to initially certify an initiative petition, the Attorney General does not evaluate a petition’s broader constitutionality; her certification decision is limited only to the narrow criteria listed in Article 48. Thus, this Petition has been certified by the Attorney General under Article 48, but it has not been evaluated by her or the courts for its constitutionality at this time.

For these reasons, a majority of the Committee recommends that the General Court **take no action** on Initiative Petition 25-15, House 5005, *Initiative Petition for a Law to Protect Water & Nature*.

Senators.

Cindy F. Friedman
Brendan P. Crighton
Barry R. Finegold

Representatives.

Alice Hanlon Peisch
Kate Hogan
Frank A. Moran
Michael S. Day
David T. Vieira

An Act relative to limiting state tax collection growth and returning surpluses to taxpayers (House, No. 5006) (introduced into the General Court by the initiative petition of Christopher Robert Anderson and others) and An Act relative to reducing the state personal income tax rate from 5% to 4% (House, No. 5007) (introduced into the General Court by the initiative petition of James John Stergios and others).

Limiting
state tax
collection
growth and
state personal
income tax,—
rate reduction.

The majority report of the committee (House, No. 5407) is as follows:

MAJORITY REPORT.

A majority of the Special Joint Committee on Initiative Petitions

Article 48 of the Amendments to the Constitution of the Commonwealth allows voters to propose laws or constitutional amendments through initiative petitions, commonly called ballot questions. After gathering the required signatures and submitting certified signatures to the Secretary of the Commonwealth, a petition is formally presented to the Legislature for consideration. It is then referred to a committee, in this case, the Special Joint Committee on Initiative Petitions.

Under Article 48, the committee must report to the Legislature on each petition before the first Wednesday in May. Unlike the standard legislative process, the Legislature may only approve or reject an initiative petition as submitted, without making changes.

The Committee held a hearing on Initiative Petition 25-17, House 5006, *Initiative Petition for a Law Relative to Limiting State Tax Collection Growth and Returning Surpluses to Taxpayers*, and Initiative Petition 25-18, House 5007, *Initiative Petition for a Law Relative to Reducing the State Personal Income Tax Rate from 5% to 4%*, on March 30, 2026.. The Special Joint Committee on Initiative Petitions held public hearings throughout March 2026 to gather testimony and inform its review. The Committee considered input from subject matter experts, proponents and opponents of the Petitions, as well as members of the public. The full hearing record and supporting documentation is available to the public at malegislature.gov/Events/Hearings/Detail/5631.

On May 4, 2026 a majority of the Special Joint Committee on Initiative Petitions (“the Committee”) voted to recommend that the General Court **take no action** on Initiative Petition 25-17, House No. 5006, *Initiative Petition for a Law Relative to Limiting State Tax Collection Growth and Returning Surpluses to Taxpayers* and Initiative Petition 25-18, House No. 5007, *Initiative Petition for a Law Relative to Reducing the State Personal Income Tax Rate from 5% to 4%*.

In reaching this determination, the Committee conducted a comprehensive review of the proposed measure, including a detailed analysis of its language, structure, and intended effect. The Committee evaluated testimony and supporting evidence presented during the public hearing, as well as supportive written

submissions from policy and economic experts, advocacy and labor organizations, and members of the public. The review found that together, these Initiative Petitions would significantly weaken the Commonwealth's ability to respond to economic downturns by reducing revenues, limiting reserves, and triggering refunds after recessions, jeopardizing funding for essential services while disproportionately benefiting high-income earners over lower- and middle-income residents.

The two Petitions, if implemented, would reduce or limit the amount of revenue the state government receives in a fiscal year. The Petition reducing the income tax from 5% to 4% would result in a projected loss of over \$5.3 billion in state revenues in the first full fiscal year after implementation, according to an analysis by the Massachusetts Taxpayers Foundation. This reduction is equivalent to 406.7% of Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 Unrestricted General Government Aid, which is state aid that goes directly to cities and towns to reduce the amount of local spending funded by property taxes, or 73.1% of FY 2026 Chapter 70 education aid, which is state aid to cities, towns, and regional school districts to cover educational expenses. This reduction would have a drastic impact on state budgeting and the ability to fund the programs and services that the residents of the Commonwealth expect and deserve.

During the hearing, the proponents of the Petition noted projected tax savings under the reduction of the income tax, but these savings are largely gained by taxpayers with over \$1 million in taxable income. Those at the threshold of the Fair Share surtax – the amount where an additional 4% in income tax begins to be assessed – would see estimated tax savings of \$10,744 per year, while full-time, married workers at \$25 an hour would see savings of \$381 per year, and a full-time, married couple earning an income of \$80,115 would see savings of \$713 per year, for example. Further to the benefit of million-dollar plus earners, the reduction in income tax would also reduce the current short-term capital gains tax on investments from 8.5% to 4%. Lower- and middle-income earners without substantial investment income would see a much smaller savings in income taxes compared to million-dollar plus earners.

The Petition related to changing the formula that calculates the Chapter 62F revenue growth limit would tweak a law that has only been triggered twice since the law was enacted in 1986, once in 1987 and again in 2022. Chapter 62F was established to serve as a check on state spending by ensuring that revenue could not grow excessively. The law requires the Department of Revenue to issue a credit to taxpayers if total tax revenues in a given fiscal year exceed an annual cap tied to wage and salary growth in the Commonwealth. This Petition aims to change the Chapter 62F calculation by including revenues collected through the Fair Share Amendment, which are currently not part of the formula. It would also base the maximum revenue the state could collect on the *actual* amount of revenue collected in the previous year, rather than the current formula which is based on the previous year's *limit*. This would hinder the state's economic resiliency during uncertain times, as a bad economic year would likely result in lower revenues, and a resulting economic bounce back the following year would more likely trigger a tax refund. This would mean that the state would have less of an ability to restore funding to programs that were cut or to replenish the state's stabilization fund ("Rainy Day Fund") that is used to supplement a loss of revenue and keep programs funded during a bad economic outlook.

In combination, these Petitions would severely impact the Commonwealth's ability to withstand fluctuating economic conditions created by periods of recession or high inflation, where expenses grow faster than revenue. In the Great Recession of 2008, Massachusetts turned to the Stabilization Fund to ensure that schools were able to be funded, programs were not drastically slashed across the board, and state

employees would receive their paychecks. With the reduction in revenue from reducing the income tax, the state would very likely struggle to maintain a healthy set of reserves in the stabilization fund to get through a recession, and the new calculation of the Chapter 62F revenue limit would likely trigger refunds in the year following a recession. Combined, these Petitions have the potential to bring a devastating impact to funding for our roads, bridges, schools, safety net programs, while bringing minimal savings back to lower- and median-income residents and, instead, funding large tax savings and rebates for million-dollar plus earners.

It is important to note that Article 48 of the Amendments to the Massachusetts Constitution, which governs the initiative petition process, requires the Attorney General to provide initial certification of initiative petitions that meet the specific and limited requirements listed in Article 48. In making a decision on whether to initially certify an initiative petition, the Attorney General does not evaluate a petition's broader constitutionality; her certification decision is limited only to the narrow criteria listed in Article 48. Thus, this Petition has been certified by the Attorney General under Article 48, but it has not been evaluated by her or the courts for its constitutionality at this time.

For these reasons, a majority of the Committee recommends that the General Court take no action on Initiative Petition 25-17, House No. 5006, *Initiative Petition for a Law Relative to Limiting State Tax Collection Growth and Returning Surpluses to Taxpayers*, and Initiative Petition 25-18, House 5007, *Initiative Petition for a Law Relative to Reducing the State Personal Income Tax Rate from 5% to 4%*.

Senators.

Cindy F. Friedman
Brendan P. Crighton
Paul R. Feeney
Barry R. Finegold

Representatives.

Alice Hanlon Peisch
Kate Hogan
Frank A. Moran
Michael S. Day
David T. Vieira

The minority report of the committee (House, No. 5415) is as follows:

MINORITY REPORT.

Reducing the income tax would place an average of \$1,500 in the pockets of Massachusetts families, providing meaningful financial relief and helping to make the Commonwealth more affordable across essential cost areas, including housing, childcare, electricity, fuel, and healthcare. Massachusetts is amongst the least affordable states to live in with one of the highest rates of net out-migration. Our neighbors, friends, and family are leaving and taking with them the state's economic future. The Commonwealth ranked last in private sector job creation, a bleak illustration of the state's waning economic vitality. Families and individuals of all income brackets are leaving the state in search of a more affordable cost of living because of the state's misaligned priorities, and without a significant change in course, the consequences of these policies will not meet the needs of residents. The Commonwealth turned a blind eye to reforming the state's so-called "Right-to-Shelter Law", which siphoned a multi-billion-dollar hole in the state budget, despite legislative efforts to reign in the law. Further, at its peak, more than \$3,300 was spent per week per family, many of whom were not legally present and could not be legally permitted to contribute to the state's economy by entering the state's workforce. The Commonwealth's clean energy and climate plan adopted in the Global Warming

Solutions Act has further exacerbated the affordability crisis. During the hearing for these petitions, some provided testimony suggested that a 1% cut to the state income tax was insignificant for Massachusetts residents. Providing tax relief is not simply a matter of economic policy; it is an acknowledgment of the everyday challenges facing residents and a commitment to making Massachusetts a place where people can afford to live, work, and build their futures. If Massachusetts hopes to remain competitive with neighboring states, it must meaningfully address the financial pressures residents face. Residents of the state need relief from the unaffordable policies that the state legislature and Governor have adopted, driving up the costs of housing and energy. These two initiative petitions provide a practical pathway toward relieving some of this burden by reducing the tax load on individuals and ensuring that the Commonwealth does not collect revenue beyond what is reasonably needed to fund essential services.

For these reasons, the minority of the Committee recommends that the General Court adopt Initiative Petition 25-18, House 5007, Initiative Petition for a Law Relative to Reducing the State Personal Income Tax Rate from 5% to 4%, and Initiative Petition 25-17, House 5006, Initiative Petition for a Law Relative to Limiting State Tax Collection Growth and Returning Surpluses to Taxpayers.

Senator.
Ryan C. Fattman

An Act to protect tenants by limiting rent increases (House, No. 5008) (introduced into the General Court by the initiative petition of Adam Gomez and others).

Rent
limiting
increases.

The majority report of the committee (House, No. 5408) is as follows:

MAJORITY REPORT.

A majority of the Special Joint Committee on Initiative Petitions

Article 48 of the Amendments to the Constitution of the Commonwealth allows voters to propose laws or constitutional amendments through initiative petitions, commonly called ballot questions. After gathering the required signatures and submitting certified signatures to the Secretary of the Commonwealth, a petition is formally presented to the Legislature for consideration. It is then referred to a committee, in this case, the Special Joint Committee on Initiative Petitions.

Under Article 48, the committee must report to the Legislature on each petition before the first Wednesday in May. Unlike the standard legislative process, the Legislature may only approve or reject an initiative petition as submitted, without making changes.

The Committee held a hearing on Initiative Petition 25-21, House 5008, *Initiative Petition to Protect Tenants by Limiting Rent Increases*, on March 17, 2026. The Special Joint Committee on Initiative Petitions held public hearings throughout March 2026 to gather testimony and inform its review. The Committee considered input from subject matter experts, proponents and opponents of the Petition, as well as members of the public. The full hearing record and supporting documentation, is available to the public at malegislature.gov/Events/Hearings/Detail/5598.

On May 4, 2026, a majority of the Special Joint Committee on Initiative Petitions (“the Committee”) voted to recommend that the General Court **take no action** on Initiative Petition 25-21, House No. 5008, *Initiative Petition to Protect Tenants by Limiting Rent Increases* (“the Petition”).

In reaching this determination, the Committee conducted a comprehensive review of the proposed measure, including a detailed analysis of its language, structure, and intended effect. The Committee evaluated testimony and supporting evidence presented during the public hearing, as well as additional written submissions from policy experts, housing advocacy organizations, and members of the public.

This Petition would limit the increase of residential rent charged to a tenant to a year-over-year growth of no more than 5%, or the equivalent percentage of the annual increase in Consumer Price Index (CPI), whichever is the lower value. The law would not apply in the following situations: to units in owner-occupied buildings with four or fewer units; to units that are subject to regulation by a public authority; to units rented to transient guests for periods of less than 14 days; to units operated for educational, religious, or non-profit purposes; and to units that received their residential certificate of occupancy within the last 10 years.

In an effort to prevent new home construction from stalling, the Petition also exempts rent control from applying to units that have received a certificate of residential occupancy in the previous 10 years.

This Petition would apply in every community statewide, which is distinct from the most recent authorized rent regulation in Massachusetts from 1970 that allowed communities with over 50,000 residents to control rent increases. Unlike past practice, this Petition would apply equally to every community in the Commonwealth, with no provision for a municipality to opt-in or opt-out, or to establish a community-specific maximum allowable rent increase.

The expert testimony provided compared this Petition with the existing laws of three other states, noting that this Petition would provide Massachusetts with the lowest allowable rent increase, no vacancy decontrol, and the shortest amount of exemption for new construction. The proponents of this Petition argue that this would be the strongest legislation to confront the increasingly severe rate of increase in cost that renters are seeing statewide. Opponents in the hearing testified that the restrictive nature of this Petition could stifle home construction and lead property owners, especially those with a small number of units, to convert rental units to condominiums, further exacerbating the challenges of gaining access to housing in Massachusetts.

It is important to note that Article 48 of the Amendments to the Massachusetts Constitution, which governs the initiative petition process, requires the Attorney General to provide initial certification of initiative petitions that meet the specific and limited requirements listed in Article 48. In making a decision on whether to initially certify an initiative petition, the Attorney General does not evaluate a petition's broader constitutionality; her certification decision is limited only to the narrow criteria listed in Article 48. Thus, this Petition has been certified by the Attorney General under Article 48, but it has not been evaluated by her or the courts for its constitutionality at this time.

Members of this Committee acknowledge that there is a housing crisis across the Commonwealth that will likely take many different public- and private-sector solutions to fully address. While there are members of the Committee who agree with the concept of rent stabilization, given the complexities of the housing market and the issues raised by the expert, proponents, and opponents of this Petition as written, a majority of the Committee recommends that the General Court **take no action** on Initiative Petition 25-21, House No. 5008, *Initiative Petition to Protect Tenants by Limiting Rent Increases*.

Senators.
Cindy F. Friedman
Brendan P. Crighton
Paul R. Feeney
Barry R. Finegold

Representatives.
Alice Hanlon Peisch
Kate Hogan
Frank A. Moran
Michael S. Day
David T. Vieira

An Act relative to labor relations policies for committee for public counsel services employees (House, No. 5009) (introduced into the General Court by the initiative petition of Vicki Jean McAuley and others).

Public counsel
services
employees.

The majority report of the committee (House, No. 5409) is as follows:

MAJORITY REPORT.

A majority of the Special Joint Committee on Initiative Petitions

Article 48 of the Amendments to the Constitution of the Commonwealth allows voters to propose laws or constitutional amendments through initiative petitions, commonly called ballot questions. After gathering the required signatures and submitting certified signatures to the Secretary of the Commonwealth, a petition is formally presented to the Legislature for consideration. It is then referred to a committee, in this case, the Special Joint Committee on Initiative Petitions.

Under Article 48, the committee must report to the Legislature on each petition before the first Wednesday in May. Unlike the standard legislative process, the Legislature may only approve or reject an initiative petition as submitted, without making changes.

The Committee held a hearing on Initiative Petition 25-22, House 5009, *Initiative Petition for a Law Relative to Labor Relations Policies for Committee for Public Counsel Services Employees*, on March 16, 2026. The Special Joint Committee on Initiative Petitions held public hearings throughout March 2026 to gather testimony and inform its review. The Committee considered input from subject matter experts and proponents of the Petition, as well as members of the public. The full hearing record and supporting documentation is available to the public at malegislature.gov/Events/Hearings/Detail/5595.

On May 4, 2026, a majority of the Special Joint Committee on Initiative Petitions (“the Committee”) voted to recommend that the General Court **take no action** on Initiative Petition 25-22, House 5009, *Initiative Petition for a Law Relative to Labor Relations Policies for Committee for Public Counsel Services Employees* (“the Petition”).

In reaching this determination, the Committee conducted a comprehensive review of the proposed measure, including a close examination of its language, structure, and stated intent. The Committee evaluated testimony and documentary evidence presented during the public hearing, along with written submissions received by the Committee. The testimony reflected a broad range of perspectives from stakeholders with direct experience in public defense, labor relations, and public administration.

Proponents of the Petition argued that the proposed changes would enhance employee representation within the Committee for Public Counsel Services (CPCS), promote greater consistency and fairness in workplace policies, and support improved recruitment and retention of attorneys and staff. Several supporters emphasized ongoing challenges related to workload, compensation, and workplace conditions, and contended that expanded labor protections and collective bargaining rights would

strengthen the agency's ability to attract and retain qualified personnel, ultimately benefiting the clients CPCS serves.

Experts raised concerns regarding the scope and structure of the proposal. Testimony highlighted the potential for the measure to disrupt existing management and supervisory frameworks, introduce ambiguity into lines of authority, and create operational inefficiencies. Some witnesses also cautioned that changes to labor relations policies of this scale could have unintended consequences for the delivery of legal services, particularly if they limit the agency's ability to respond flexibly to fluctuating caseloads, staffing needs, and court demands.

The Committee notes that the Committee for Public Counsel Services was established to ensure that indigent individuals in the Commonwealth receive legal representation in criminal and certain family law matters, consistent with the Sixth Amendment to the United States Constitution and Article XII of the Declaration of Rights of the Constitution of the Commonwealth. Public defenders and assigned counsel fulfill a critical constitutional function, and their role in safeguarding due process and equal access to justice is fundamental to the integrity of the legal system.

In evaluating the Petition, the Committee carefully considered the testimony of the experts, proponents and members of the public. Based on the issues raised by the testimony, the Committee encourages continued dialogue and collaboration between the petition's proponents and the Committee for Public Counsel Services to address issues highlighted by the testimony. The Committee further encourages CPCS to continue examining and addressing workplace challenges in a manner that strengthens both employee well-being and the agency's core mission of delivering high-quality legal representation to indigent clients.

It is important to note that Article 48 of the Amendments to the Massachusetts Constitution, which governs the initiative petition process, requires the Attorney General to provide initial certification of initiative petitions that meet the specific and limited requirements listed in Article 48. In making a decision on whether to initially certify an initiative petition, the Attorney General does not evaluate a petition's broader constitutionality; her certification decision is limited only to the narrow criteria listed in Article 48. Thus, this Petition has been certified by the Attorney General under Article 48, but it has not been evaluated by her or the courts for its constitutionality at this time.

For these reasons, a majority of the Committee recommends that the General Court **take no action** on Initiative Petition 25-22, House 5009, *Initiative Petition for a Law Relative to Labor Relations Policies for Committee for Public Counsel Services Employees*.

Senators.

Cindy F. Friedman
Brendan P. Crighton
Barry R. Finegold

Representatives.

Alice Hanlon Peisch
Kate Hogan
Frank A. Moran
Michael S. Day
David T. Vieira

An Act to reform and regulate legislative stipends (House, No. 5010) (introduced into the General Court by the initiative petition of John A. Lippitt and others).

Legislative stipends.

The majority report of the committee (House, No. 5410) is as follows:

MAJORITY REPORT.

A majority of the Special Joint Committee on Initiative Petitions

Article 48 of the Amendments to the Constitution of the Commonwealth allows voters to propose laws or constitutional amendments through initiative petitions, commonly called ballot questions. After gathering the required signatures and submitting certified signatures to the Secretary of the Commonwealth, a petition is formally presented to the Legislature for consideration. It is then referred to a committee, in this case, the Special Joint Committee on Initiative Petitions.

Under Article 48, the committee must report to the Legislature on each petition before the first Wednesday in May. Unlike the standard legislative process, the Legislature may only approve or reject an initiative petition as submitted, without making changes.

The Committee held a hearing on Initiative Petition 25-37, House 5010, *Initiative Petition for an Act to Reform and Regulate Legislative Stipends*, on March 17, 2026. The Special Joint Committee on Initiative Petitions held public hearings throughout March 2026 to gather testimony and inform its review. The Committee considered input from subject matter experts, proponents and opponents of the Petition, as well as members of the public. The full hearing and supporting documentation is available to the public at malegislature.gov/Events/Hearings/Detail/5589.

During the Committee’s consideration of this Petition, the Justices of the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court (SJC) issued an advisory opinion on the Petition on April 27, 2026. The advisory opinion concluded that the legislative stipends ballot proposal is unconstitutional. The Justices of the SJC wrote that the ballot question regulates legislative procedures rather than establishing a permissible law, which is outside the scope of the initiative petition process. The Justices concluded that the Petition is “not in proper form for submission to the people”.

Given the SJC’s finding of unconstitutionality, on May 4, 2026, a majority of the Special Joint Committee on Initiative Petitions voted to recommend that the General Court **take no action** on Initiative Petition 25-37, House 5010, *Initiative Petition for an Act to Reform and Regulate Legislative Stipends*.

Senators.

Cindy F. Friedman
Brendan P. Crighton
Paul R. Feeney
Barry R. Finegold

Representatives.

Alice Hanlon Peisch
Kate Hogan
Frank A. Moran
Michael S. Day
David T. Vieira

Article XLVIII, as amended by Section 2 of Article LXXXI of the Amendments to the Constitution, requires that a vote be taken by yeas and nays in both branches before the first Wednesday of May upon the enactment of such law in the form in which it stands in the petition. Accordingly, no action was taken beyond the receipt of the committee reports.

Reports of Committees.

By Mr. Galvin of Canton, for the committee on Rules and the committees on Rules of the two branches, acting concurrently, that Joint Rule 12 be suspended on the petition of Kip A. Diggs for legislation to further regulate the transportation of vessels in the villages of Marston Mills and Osterville in the town of Barnstable.

Barnstable,—
vessels.

UNCORRECTED PROOF.

Under suspension of the rules, on motion of Mr. Owens of Watertown, the report was considered forthwith. Joint Rule 12 was suspended; and the petition (accompanied by bill) was referred to the committee on Transportation. Sent to the Senate for concurrence.

By Mr. Honan of Boston, for the committee on Steering, Policy and Scheduling, that the following House bills be scheduled for consideration by the House:

Authorizing the town of Westford to grant one additional license for the sale of all alcoholic beverages to be drunk off the premises (House, No. 5345) [Local Approval Received];

Westford,—
liquor
license.

Authorizing the City of Westfield to convert a seasonal license for the sale of all alcoholic beverages to be drunk off premises to an annual license for the sale of all alcoholic beverages to be drunk off premises (House, No. 5346) [Local Approval Received]; and

Westfield,—
liquor
license.

Establishing a sick leave bank for Carla Johnson, an employee of the department of unemployment assistance (House, No. 5399);

Carla Johnson,—
sick leave.

Under suspension of Rule 7A, in each instance, on motion of Mr. Owens of Watertown, the bills severally were read a second time forthwith; and they were ordered to a third reading.

The following reports were received, the time within which the said committees were required to report having expired:

By Ms. Barber of Somerville, for the committee on Environment and Natural Resources, on House, No. 1044, an Order relative to authorizing the committee on Environment and Natural Resources to make an investigation and study of a certain House document relative to climate change staffing levels (House, No. 5368).

Climate change
staffing levels,—
study.

By the same member, for the same committee, on House, No. 4319, an Order relative to authorizing the committee on Environment and Natural Resources to make an investigation and study of a certain House document relative to pet sales (House, No. 5369).

Pet sales,—
study.

By Mr. McMurtry of Dedham, for the committee on Labor and Workforce Development, on House, Nos. 2078, 2079, 2088, 2093, 2125, 2137, 2146, 2164, 2185 and 4291, an Order relative to authorizing the committee on Labor and Workforce Development to make an investigation of certain House documents relative to collective bargaining, paid family leave and other related matters (House, No. 5370).

Collective
bargaining, paid
family leave and
other related
matters,—
study.

By Mr. Madaro of Boston, for the committee on Revenue, on House, Nos. 3066, 3100, 3147, 3178 and 3259, an Order relative to authorizing the committee on Revenue to make an investigation and study of certain House documents relative to tax credits, tax exemptions and other related matters (House, No. 5371).

Tax credits,
tax exemptions
and other
related matters,—
study.

By Mr. Cabral of New Bedford, for the committee on State Administration and Regulatory Oversight, on House, No. 3330, an Order relative to authorizing the committee on State Administration and Regulatory Oversight to make an investigation and study of a certain House document relative to municipal light plants (House, No. 5372).

Municipal
light plants,—
study.

Severally referred, under Joint Rule 29, to the committees on Rules of the two branches, acting concurrently.

Subsequently, Mr. Galvin of Canton, for said committees, reported, in each instance, asking to be discharged from further consideration of the orders; and recommending that the same severally be referred to the House committee on Rules.

Under Rule 42, the reports severally were considered forthwith; and they were accepted.

Emergency Measure.

The engrossed Bill establishing a sick leave bank for Courtney Cochran, an employee of the department of children and families (see House, No. 5245), having been certified by the Clerk to be rightly and truly prepared for final passage, was considered, the question being on adopting the emergency preamble.

Courtney Cochran,—
sick leave.

A separate vote was taken, as required by the provisions of Article XLVIII (as amended by Article LXVII) of the Amendments to the Constitution; and the preamble was adopted, by a vote of 3 to 0. Sent to the Senate for concurrence.

Subsequently, the Senate having concurred in adoption of the emergency preamble, the bill (which originated in the House) was passed to be enacted; and it was signed by the acting Speaker and sent to the Senate.

Bill enacted.

Engrossed Bills.

Engrossed bills

Authorizing the city of Taunton to establish a separate billing rate for water supplied to manufactured housing communities (see Senate, No. 2652) (which originated in the Senate);

Bills enacted.

Providing for a town administrator in the town of Hopedale (see House, No. 4784) (which originated in the House);

Severally having been certified by the Clerk to be rightly and truly prepared for final passage, were passed to be enacted; and they were signed by the acting Speaker and sent to the Senate.

Orders of the Day.

House bills

Designating a certain bridge in the town of Chelmsford as the Ferreira Brothers Bridge (House, No. 4723); and

Third reading bills.

Amending the means tested senior citizen property tax exemption in the town of Sudbury (House, No. 4755);

Severally reported by the committee on Bills in the Third Reading to be correctly drawn, were read a third time; and they were passed to be engrossed. Severally sent to the Senate for concurrence.

The Senate Bill regulating the number of registered voters who may petition for a special town meeting in the town of Andover (Senate, No. 2544), reported by the committee on Bills in the Third Reading to be correctly drawn, was read a third time.

Andover,—
town meeting.

Pending the question on passing the bill to be engrossed, Mr. Walsh of Peabody moved to amend the bill by adding the following section:

“SECTION 2. This act shall take effect upon its passage.”.

The amendment was adopted; and the bill (Senate, No. 2544, amended) was passed to be engrossed, in concurrence. Sent to the Senate for concurrence in the amendment.

UNCORRECTED PROOF.

Order.

On motion of Mr. Mariano of Quincy,—

Ordered, That when the House adjourns today, it adjourn to meet on Monday next at eleven o'clock A.M.

Next
sitting.

At twenty-one minutes after eleven o'clock A.M., on motion of Mr. Wong of Saugus (Mr. Donato of Medford being in the Chair), the House adjourned, to meet the following Monday at eleven o'clock A.M., in an Informal Session.