

**HOUSE . . . . . No. 01517**

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PRESENTED BY:

*Jeffrey Sánchez and*

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 passage of the accompanying bill:

An Act to eliminate racial and ethnic health disparities in the Commonwealth.

PETITION OF:

NAME:	DISTRICT/ADDRESS:
<i>Jeffrey Sánchez</i>	<i>15th Suffolk</i>
<i>Byron Rushing</i>	<i>9th Suffolk</i>
<i>Susan C. Fargo</i>	<i>Third Middlesex</i>
<i>John J. Binienda</i>	<i>17th Worcester</i>
<i>Frank I. Smizik</i>	<i>15th Norfolk</i>
<i>Martin J. Walsh</i>	<i>13th Suffolk</i>
<i>Martha M. Walz</i>	<i>8th Suffolk</i>
<i>James B. Eldridge</i>	<i>Middlesex and Worcester</i>
<i>Elizabeth A. Malia</i>	<i>11th Suffolk</i>
<i>Jay Kaufman</i>	<i>15th Middlesex</i>
<i>Jason M. Lewis</i>	<i>31st Middlesex</i>
<i>Antonio F. D. Cabral</i>	<i>13th Bristol</i>
<i>Sean Garballey</i>	<i>23rd Middlesex</i>
<i>Alice K. Wolf</i>	<i>25th Middlesex</i>
<i>Sonia Chang-Diaz</i>	<i>Second Suffolk</i>
<i>Carlos Henriquez</i>	<i>5th Suffolk</i>
<i>James J. O'Day</i>	<i>14th Worcester</i>

<i>Gloria L. Fox</i>	<i>7th Suffolk</i>
<i>Linda Dorcena Forry</i>	<i>12th Suffolk</i>
<i>Russell Holmes</i>	<i>6th Suffolk</i>
<i>Ellen Story</i>	<i>3rd Hampshire</i>
<i>Denise Provost</i>	<i>27th Middlesex</i>
<i>Kay Khan</i>	<i>11th Middlesex</i>
<i>Denise Andrews</i>	<i>2nd Franklin</i>

# HOUSE . . . . . No. 01517

By Messrs. Sánchez of Boston and Rushing, a petition (accompanied by bill, House, No. 1517) of Jeffrey Sánchez, Byron Rushing and others for legislation to eliminate racial and ethnic health disparities. Public Health.

## The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

In the Year Two Thousand Eleven

An Act to eliminate racial and ethnic health disparities in the Commonwealth.

*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. The General Court finds and declares that:
- 2 (a) disparities in health and healthcare are widespread in Massachusetts, and such inequalities
- 3 compromise the health and well being of racial and ethnic minorities, impacting all
- 4 Massachusetts residents;
- 5 (b) health disparities result from a range of social and economic factors that are not limited to
- 6 healthcare, but also include education and employment, neighborhoods and housing, bias,
- 7 discrimination and a variety of social determinants;
- 8 (c) addressing health disparities for racial and ethnic minorities is important to eliminating
- 9 disparities for other underserved populations including affected gender groups, sexual minorities,
- 10 geographically-isolated communities and persons with disabilities; and

11 (d) an effective state strategy to eliminate disparities must be comprehensive and include  
12 interventions that coordinate policies and efforts across state systems, agencies, and programs.

13 SECTION 2. The second paragraph of section 16 of chapter 6A of the General Laws, as  
14 appearing in the 2008 Official Edition, is hereby amended by striking out the words “and, (7) the  
15 health facilities appeals board ” and inserting after in place thereof the following words :-

16 (7) the health facilities appeal board; and (8) the office of health equity.

17 SECTION 3. Section 16O of said chapter 6A, as so appearing, is hereby amended by inserting  
18 after the word, “recommendations,” in line 3, the following words :- to the director of the office  
19 of health equity.

20 SECTION 4. Said section 16O of said chapter 6A, as so appearing, is hereby further amended by  
21 striking out, in line 15, the figure “37” and inserting in place thereof the following figure :- 38.

22 SECTION 5. Said section 16O of said chapter 6A, as so appearing, is hereby further amended by  
23 inserting after the word “ officio ”, in line 19, the following words :- ; the director of the office of  
24 health equity, or the director’s designee.

25 SECTION 6. Said chapter 6A is hereby amended by inserting after section 16S the following  
26 section: –

27 Section 16T. There shall be an office of health equity within the executive office of health and  
28 human services. The office shall be in the charge of a director, who shall report directly to the  
29 secretary of health and human services. The health disparities council, described in section 16O,  
30 shall serve as an advisory board to the office of health equity.

31 SECTION 7. The General Laws are hereby amended by inserting after chapter 111N the  
32 following chapter:–

33 CHAPTER 111O . OFFICE OF HEALTH EQUITY.

34 Section 1. As used in this chapter the following words shall, unless the context clearly requires  
35 otherwise, have the following meanings: –

36 “Disparities” or “Racial and ethnic health and health care disparities”, differences in the  
37 incidence, prevalence, mortality and burden of diseases and other adverse health conditions that  
38 exist among specific racial and ethnic groups.

39 “Office”, the office of health equity, as established by section 16T of chapter 6A.

40 Section 2. The office, subject to appropriation, shall coordinate all activities of the  
41 commonwealth to eliminate racial and ethnic health and health care disparities. The office shall  
42 set goals for the reduction of disparities and prepare an annual plan for the commonwealth to  
43 eliminate disparities.

44 Section 3. The office, subject to appropriation, shall collaborate with other state agencies of the  
45 commonwealth on disparities reduction initiatives to address the social factors that influence  
46 health inequality. These state agencies shall include, but shall not be limited to, the executive  
47 office of health and human services, the executive office of housing and economic development,  
48 the executive office of public safety and security, the executive office of energy and  
49 environmental affairs, the Massachusetts Department of Transportation, the executive office of  
50 labor and workforce development and the executive office of education.

51 The office shall facilitate communication and partnership between these agencies to develop  
52 greater understanding of the intersections between agency activities and health outcomes. The  
53 office shall facilitate development of interagency initiatives to address the social and economic  
54 determinants of health and key health disparities issues including, but not limited to, healthcare  
55 access and quality; housing availability and quality; transportation availability, location and cost;  
56 community policing and safe spaces; air, water, land usage and quality; employment and  
57 workforce development; and education access and quality.

58 Section 4. The office, subject to appropriation, shall evaluate the effectiveness of programs and  
59 interventions to eliminate health disparities, identifying best practices and model programs for  
60 the state.

61 Section 5. The secretary of health and human services shall annually, on the day assigned for  
62 submission of the budget to the general court under section 7H of chapter 29, designate major  
63 initiatives of the commonwealth affecting the health and health care of residents of the  
64 commonwealth. These initiatives may include any activity of the commonwealth including, but  
65 not limited to, activities of the executive office of health and human services, the executive  
66 office of housing and economic development, the executive office of public safety and security,  
67 the executive office of energy and environmental affairs, the Massachusetts Department of  
68 Transportation, the executive office of labor and workforce development and the executive office  
69 of education.

70 For each major initiative, the office shall prepare a disparities impact statement evaluating the  
71 likely positive or negative impact of each initiative on eliminating or reducing racial and ethnic  
72 health disparities. The statements shall, to the extent possible, include quantifiable impacts and

73 evaluation benchmarks. The statements shall be posted on the official internet site of the  
74 executive office of health and human services and submitted to the clerks of the house of  
75 representatives and senate, members of the health disparities council, appropriate legislative  
76 committees and the house and senate committees on ways and means.

77 Section 6. The office, subject to appropriation, shall prepare an annual health disparities report  
78 card. The report card shall evaluate the progress of the commonwealth toward eliminating racial  
79 and ethnic health disparities, using, where possible, quantifiable measures and comparative  
80 benchmarks. The report card shall report on progress on a regional basis, based on regions  
81 designated by the office. The office shall hold public hearings in several regions of the state to  
82 get public information on the topics of the report card. The report card shall be delivered to the  
83 governor, speaker of the house of representatives and president of the senate and the members of  
84 the health disparities council, established under section 16O of chapter 6A, before July 1 of each  
85 year and shall be posted on the official internet site of the office or executive office of health and  
86 human services.

87 SECTION 8. Section 16K of Chapter 6A of the General Laws, as so appearing, is hereby  
88 amended by striking out, in subsection (h), as amended by section 3 of chapter 288 of the acts of  
89 2010, the third sentence and inserting in place thereof the following sentence:- The council shall  
90 also establish goals that are intended to reduce health care disparities in racial, ethnic and  
91 disabled communities and in doing so shall seek to incorporate the recommendations of the  
92 health disparities council and the office of health equity.