

**HOUSE . . . . . No. 3903**

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The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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**In the One Hundred and Eighty-Ninth General Court  
(2015-2016)**  
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Resolve providing for an investigation and study by a special commission relative to the need for accessible homes for the elderly, returning veterans with disabilities, and families that include persons with disabilities.

1           Resolved, that a special commission is hereby established for the purpose of making an  
2 investigation and study relative to the need for accessible homes for people with mobility  
3 limitations, including the elderly, returning veterans with disabilities, and households that  
4 include persons with disabilities. This commission shall review and evaluate options related to  
5 the application of Visitability, or Basic Home Design, which would expand opportunities for  
6 people with mobility limitations to visit their families, friends, and neighbors.

7           The commission shall examine the need to expand basic accessibility features in homes  
8 to ensure that people with mobility limitations have quality relationships with their families and  
9 friends, and the opportunity to fully integrate into their communities. The commission shall  
10 consider the extent to which accomplishing this requires an investment in building a housing  
11 supply that is responsive to the needs of people as they age and can adapt to the needs of future  
12 generations.

13           The commission shall file a report with the clerks of the senate and house of  
14 representatives not later than 180 days after first convening. The report shall (a) identify studies

15 with demographic analyses that consider the proportion of present and future households having  
16 a member with a mobility limitation, (b) examine existing housing, and the design and rate of  
17 new housing being built that would allow a person with a mobility limitation to visit, or  
18 otherwise be accommodated temporarily, or for a longer period of time, (c) consider the total  
19 number of family members who would likely occupy a single housing unit over its functionally  
20 useful life, and the likelihood that during this time, someone with a mobility limitation would  
21 live there and would be better accommodated if the home had features related to Visitability, or  
22 Basic Home Design, and (d) by reviewing other studies and conducting such other analyses as  
23 the commission in its discretion believes are relevant to its determination of the need to expand  
24 the number of visitable homes in the commonwealth.

25         The commission report shall examine strategies to increase public awareness of (a) the  
26 need for visitable homes, (b) the options that would be effective in expanding the number of such  
27 homes that are available to meet this need in communities across the commonwealth, and (c) the  
28 costs and benefits of a successful program that accomplishes these ends.

29         The commission report shall review the policies underlying existing publicly financed  
30 and funded housing development programs in state government and in local jurisdictions in the  
31 commonwealth and determine the extent to which there are policies that have been adopted or  
32 are under consideration involving Visitability, or Basic Home Design, as a minimum  
33 accessibility standard, and consider the reasonable options for extending the coverage of such  
34 policies to all new housing produced in the commonwealth.

35         The commission report shall consider the policy changes necessary to meet the need for  
36 visitable homes in the commonwealth by the year 2040, or such other year as the commission

37 may determine to be more appropriate during its review. It shall formulate its recommendations  
38 taking into account the best practices and experiences in other jurisdictions, including a  
39 comparison of the effectiveness of incentives versus adoption of building code standards that are  
40 central to Visitability, or Basic Home Design.

41           The commission shall consist of 3 members of the senate, 1 of whom shall be appointed  
42 co-chair of the commission; 3 members of the house of representatives, 1 of whom shall be  
43 appointed co-chair of the commission; the Secretary of the Executive Office of Elder Affairs, or  
44 a designee; the Secretary of the Department of Veterans' Services, or a designee; the Director of  
45 the Office on Disability, or a designee; the Secretary of Housing and Economic Development, or  
46 a designee; the Executive Director of the Architectural Access Board, or a designee; the  
47 Administrator of the Board of Building Regulations and Standards, or a designee; the Executive  
48 Director of the Massachusetts Municipal Association, or a designee; the Executive Director of  
49 the Disability Law Center of Massachusetts, or a designee; the Executive Director of the Boston  
50 Center for Independent Living, or a designee; the state director of AARP Massachusetts, or a  
51 designee; the Executive Director of Citizens' Housing and Planning Association, or a designee;  
52 the President of the Home Builders Association of Massachusetts, or a designee; the President of  
53 the Massachusetts Association of Community Development Corporations, or a designee; and an  
54 architect appointed by the governor who has considerable experience in single-family home  
55 accessibility issues related to Visitability, or Basic Home Design.

56           All appointments shall be made not later than 60 days after the effective date of this  
57 resolve. The chairpersons shall meet with the commission not later than 90 days after the  
58 effective date of this resolve, and shall meet not less than bi-monthly thereafter.

59           The Special commission shall be empowered to hold regular public meetings, fact-  
60 finding hearings and other public forums as it considers necessary. Members shall not receive  
61 compensation for their services.

62           The commission shall report on its recommendations, including recommendations for  
63 legislation, if any, to the senate president, the speaker of the house, and the governor.