

HOUSE No. 667

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PRESENTED BY:

Jonathan Hecht and Patricia D. Jehlen

To the Honorable Senate and House of Representatives of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in General Court assembled:

The undersigned legislators and/or citizens respectfully petition for the adoption of the accompanying resolve:

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.

PETITION OF:

NAME:	DISTRICT/ADDRESS:
<i>Jonathan Hecht</i>	<i>29th Middlesex</i>
<i>James M. Cantwell</i>	<i>4th Plymouth</i>
<i>Jeffrey N. Roy</i>	<i>10th Norfolk</i>
<i>Bruce E. Tarr</i>	<i>First Essex and Middlesex</i>

HOUSE No. 667

By Representative Hecht of Watertown and Senator Jehlen, a joint petition (accompanied by resolve, House, No. 667) of Jonathan Hecht and others for an investigation by a special commission (including members of the General Court) relative to the need for accessible homes for the elderly, returning veterans with disabilities and families that include persons with disabilities. Housing.

[SIMILAR MATTER FILED IN PREVIOUS SESSION
SEE HOUSE, NO. 3903 OF 2015-2016.]

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

**In the One Hundred and Ninetieth General Court
(2017-2018)**

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 the building standards known as Visitability, or Basic Home Design, which
6 would expand opportunities for people with mobility limitations to visit their families, friends,
7 and neighbors.

8 The commission shall examine the need to expand basic accessibility features in homes
9 to ensure that people with mobility limitations have quality relationships with their families and

10 friends, and the opportunity to fully integrate into their communities. The commission shall
11 consider the extent to which accomplishing this requires an investment in building a housing
12 supply that is responsive to the needs of people as they age and can adapt to the needs of future
13 generations.

14 The commission shall file a report with the clerks of the senate and house of
15 representatives not later than 180 days after first convening. The report shall (a) identify studies
16 with demographic analyses that consider the proportion of present and future households having
17 a member with a mobility limitation, (b) examine existing housing, and the design and rate of
18 new housing being built that would allow a person with a mobility limitation to visit, or
19 otherwise be accommodated temporarily, or for a longer period of time, (c) consider the total
20 number of family members who would likely occupy a single housing unit over its functionally
21 useful life, and the likelihood that during this time, someone with a mobility limitation would
22 live there and would be better accommodated if the home had features related to Visitability, or
23 Basic Home Design, and (d) review other studies and conduct such other analyses as the
24 commission in its discretion believes are relevant to its determination of the need to expand the
25 number of visitable homes in the commonwealth.

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

30 The commission report shall review the policies underlying existing publicly financed
31 and funded housing development programs in state government and in local jurisdictions in the

32 commonwealth and determine the extent to which there are policies that have been adopted or
33 are under consideration involving Visitability, or Basic Home Design, as a minimum
34 accessibility standard, and consider the reasonable options for extending the coverage of such
35 policies to all new housing produced in the commonwealth.

36 The commission report shall consider the changes in policy, regulation, and legislation
37 necessary to meet the need for visitable homes in the commonwealth by the year 2040, or such
38 other year as the commission may determine to be more appropriate during its review. It shall
39 formulate its recommendations taking into account the best practices and experiences in other
40 jurisdictions, including a comparison of the effectiveness of incentives versus adoption of
41 building code standards that are central to Visitability, or Basic Home Design.

42 The commission shall consist of 3 members of the senate, 1 of whom shall be appointed
43 co-chair of the commission; 3 members of the house of representatives, 1 of whom shall be
44 appointed co-chair of the commission; the Secretary of the Executive Office of Elder Affairs, or
45 a designee; the Secretary of the Department of Veterans' Services, or a designee; the Director of
46 the Office on Disability, or a designee; the Secretary of Housing and Economic Development, or
47 a designee; the Executive Director of the Architectural Access Board, or a designee; the
48 Administrator of the Board of Building Regulations and Standards, or a designee; the Executive
49 Director of the Massachusetts Municipal Association, or a designee; the Executive Director of
50 the Disability Law Center of Massachusetts, or a designee; the Executive Director of the Boston
51 Center for Independent Living, or a designee; the state director of AARP Massachusetts, or a
52 designee; the Executive Director of Citizens' Housing and Planning Association, or a designee;
53 the President of the Home Builders Association of Massachusetts, or a designee; the President of
54 the Massachusetts Association of Community Development Corporations, or a designee; and an

55 architect appointed by the governor who has considerable experience in single-family home
56 accessibility issues related to Visitability, or Basic Home Design.

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

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

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