

SENATE No. 2019

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PRESENTED BY:

Sonia Chang-Diaz

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 bill:

An Act providing for plain writing in certain government documents.

PETITION OF:

NAME:

Sonia Chang-Diaz

DISTRICT/ADDRESS:

Second Suffolk

SENATE No. 2019

By Ms. Chang-Diaz, a petition (accompanied by bill, Senate, No. 2019) of Sonia Chang-Diaz for legislation to provide for plain writing in certain government documents. State Administration and Regulatory Oversight.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

**In the One Hundred and Ninety-Second General Court
(2021-2022)**

An Act providing for plain writing in certain government documents.

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. Chapter 6 of the General Laws is hereby amended by adding the following
2 section:-

3 Section 221. (a) For the purposes of this section, the following words shall have the
4 following meanings unless the context clearly requires otherwise:

5 “Agency”, as defined in section 39.

6 “Covered document”, any document that: (i) is necessary for obtaining any state benefit
7 or service or filing taxes; (ii) provides information about any state benefit or service; or (iii)
8 explains to the public how to comply with a requirement the commonwealth administers or
9 enforces; provided, however, that “covered document” shall include a letter, publication, form,
10 notice or instruction, whether in paper or electronic form; provided further, that “covered
11 document” shall not include a regulation.

12 “Plain writing”, writing that is clear, concise, well-organized and follows other best
13 practices appropriate to the subject or field and intended audience.

14 “Regulation”, as defined in section 1 of chapter 30A.

15 (b) The head of each agency shall: (i) designate at least 1 senior official within the agency
16 to oversee the implementation of this section; (ii) communicate the requirements of this section
17 to the employees of the agency; (iii) train employees in plain writing; and (iv) establish a process
18 for overseeing the ongoing compliance of the agency with the requirements of this section.

19 (c) Each agency shall use plain writing in every covered document that the agency issues
20 or substantially revises.

21 SECTION 2. The state auditor shall issue guidance on implementing the requirements of
22 this act not more than 6 months after the effective date of this act. The state auditor may
23 designate a working group to assist in developing and issuing the guidance.

24 SECTION 3. Each agency, as defined in section 39 of chapter 6 of the General Laws,
25 shall meet the requirements of subsection (b) of section 221 of said chapter 6 not more than 1
26 year after the effective date of this act.

27 SECTION 4. Each agency, as defined in section 39 of chapter 6 of the General Laws,
28 shall meet the requirements of subsection (c) of section 221 of said chapter 6 not more than 2
29 year after the effective date of this act.