SENATE No. 00665

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PRESENTED BY:

Gale D. Candaras

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 reform and improve alimony.

PETITION OF:

NAME:	DISTRICT/ADDRESS:
Gale D. Candaras	First Hampden and Hampshire
Steven M. Walsh	11th Essex
John V. Fernandes	10th Worcester
Bruce E. Tarr	First Essex and Middlesex
Michael J. Rodrigues	First Bristol and Plymouth
Marc Lombardo	22nd Middlesex
Frank I. Smizik	15th Norfolk
Geraldo Alicea	6th Worcester
Lori A. Ehrlich	8th Essex
Elizabeth Poirier	14th Bristol
Angelo J. Puppolo, Jr.	12th Hampden
James E. Timilty	Bristol and Norfolk
Cleon H. Turner	1st Barnstable
F. Jay Barrows	1st Bristol
James J. Dwyer	30th Middlesex
Alice K. Wolf	25th Middlesex
Bradford Hill	4th Essex

Jason M. Lewis	31st Middlesex
Dennis A. Rosa	4th Worcester
David M. Torrisi	14th Essex
Brian A. Joyce	Norfolk, Bristol, and Plymouth
Linda Dean Campbell	15th Essex
Paul Adams	17th Essex
James Arciero	2nd Middlesex
Brian Ashe	2nd Hampden
Bruce J. Ayers	1st Norfolk
Steven A. Baddour	First Essex
Ruth B. Balser	12th Middlesex
Carlo Basile	1st Suffolk
Richard Bastien	2nd Worcester
Matthew Beaton	11th Worcester
John J. Binienda	17th Worcester
Paul Brodeur	32nd Middlesex
William N. Brownsberger	24th Middlesex
Thomas J. Calter	12th Plymouth
Stephen R. Canessa	12th Bristol
James M. Cantwell	4th Plymouth
Gailanne Cariddi	1st Berkshire
Harriette L. Chandler	First Worcester
Sonia Chang-Diaz	Second Suffolk
Katherine M. Clark	Middlesex and Essex
Nick Collins	4th Suffolk
Thomas P. Conroy	13th Middlesex
Edward Coppinger	10th Suffolk
Michael A. Costello	1st Essex
Mark Cusack	5th Norfolk
Viriato Manuel deMacedo	1st Plymouth
Angelo D'Emilia	8th Plymouth
Sal N. DiDomenico	Middlesex, Suffolk, and Essex
Geoff Diehl	7th Plymouth
Stephen L. DiNatale	3rd Worcester
Kenneth J. Donnelly	Fourth Middlesex
Eileen M. Donoghue	First Middlesex
Carolyn C. Dykema	8th Middlesex
James B. Eldridge	Middlesex and Worcester
Christopher G. Fallon	33rd Middlesex

Susan C. Fargo	Third Middlesex
Ryan Fattman	18th Worcester
Robert F. Fennell	10th Essex
Kimberly Ferguson	1st Worcester
Ann-Margaret Ferrante	5th Essex
Barry R. Finegold	Second Essex and Middlesex
Michael Finn	6th Hampden
Jennifer L. Flanagan	Worcester and Middlesex
Linda Dorcena Forry	12th Suffolk
John P. Fresolo	16th Worcester
Sean Garballey	23rd Middlesex
Colleen M. Garry	36th Middlesex
Anne M. Gobi	5th Worcester
Thomas A. Golden, Jr.	16th Middlesex
Patricia A. Haddad	5th Bristol
Sheila Harrington	1st Middlesex
Jonathan Hecht	29th Middlesex
Robert L. Hedlund	Plymouth and Norfolk
Kate Hogan	3rd Middlesex
Steven Howitt	4th Bristol
Donald F. Humason, Jr.	4th Hampden
Randy Hunt	5th Barnstable
Patricia D. Jehlen	Second Middlesex
Bradley H. Jones, Jr.	20th Middlesex
Louis L. Kafka	8th Norfolk
Michael F. Kane	5th Hampden
Jay Kaufman	15th Middlesex
John F. Keenan	Norfolk and Plymouth
John D. Keenan	7th Essex
Thomas P. Kennedy	Second Plymouth and Bristol
Kay Khan	11th Middlesex
Michael R. Knapik	Second Hampden and Hampshire
Peter V. Kocot	1st Hampshire
Stephen Kulik	1st Franklin
Kevin Kuros	8th Worcester
Steven L. Levy	4th Middlesex
David Paul Linsky	5th Middlesex
James Lyons, Jr.	18th Essex
Timothy R. Madden	Barnstable, Dukes and Nantucket

Thomas M. McGee	Third Essex and Middlesex
Paul McMurtry	11th Norfolk
Mark C. Montigny	Second Bristol and Plymouth
Richard T. Moore	Worcester and Norfolk
Kevin J. Murphy	18th Middlesex
David M. Nangle	17th Middlesex
Rhonda Nyman	5th Plymouth
Shaunna O'Connell	3rd Bristol
James J. O'Day	14th Worcester
Alice Hanlon Peisch	14th Norfolk
George N. Peterson, Jr.	9th Worcester
Anthony W. Petruccelli	First Suffolk and Middlesex
Denise Provost	27th Middlesex
John H. Rogers	12th Norfolk
Richard J. Ross	Norfolk, Bristol, and Middlesex
Michael F. Rush	Suffolk and Norfolk
Jeffrey Sánchez	15th Suffolk
Tom Sannicandro	7th Middlesex
Paul Schmid, III	8th Bristol
John W. Scibak	2nd Hampshire
Stephen Stat Smith	28th Middlesex
Todd M. Smola	1st Hampden
Joyce A. Spiliotis	12th Essex
Karen E. Spilka	Second Middlesex and Norfolk
Thomas M. Stanley	9th Middlesex
William M. Straus	10th Bristol
David B. Sullivan	6th Bristol
Benjamin Swan	11th Hampden
Nicholas Boldyga	3rd Hampden
Walter F. Timilty	7th Norfolk
Steven A. Tolman	Second Suffolk and Middlesex
Timothy J. Toomey, Jr.	26th Middlesex
James E. Vallee	10th Norfolk
David Vieira,	3rd Barnstable
Martha M. Walz	8th Suffolk
Daniel K. Webster	6th Plymouth
James T. Welch	Hampden
Daniel Winslow	9th Norfolk

SENATE No. 00665

By Ms. Candaras, petition (accompanied by bill, Senate, No. 665) of Gale D. Candaras, Steven M. Walsh, John V. Fernandes, Bruce E. Tarr and other members of the General Court for legislation to reform and improve alimony [Joint Committee on the Judiciary].

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

In the Year Two Thousand Eleven

An Act to reform and improve alimony.

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. That this Act shall be known as the Alimony Reform Act of 2011
- 2 SECTION 2. Section 34 of chapter 208 of the General Laws, as appearing in the 2008
- 3 Official Edition, is hereby amended by inserting, in line 5, after the word "other" the following
- 4 words:- in accordance with Section 48.
- 5 SECTION 3. Said section 34 of said chapter 208, as so appearing, is hereby further
- 6 amended by striking out the third sentence and inserting in the place thereof the following
- 7 sentence:- In fixing the nature and value of the property, if any, to be so assigned, the court,
- 8 after hearing the witnesses, if any, of each of the parties, shall consider the length of the
- 9 marriage, the conduct of the parties during the marriage, the age, health, station, occupation,
- 10 amount and sources of income, vocational skills, employability, estate, liabilities and needs of

- 11 each of the parties, the opportunity of each for future acquisition of capital assets and income,
- 12 and the amount and duration of alimony, if any, awarded under Section 48.
- SECTION 4. Said chapter 208 is hereby further amended by inserting after section 47 the following section:-

15 Section 48. 1. Definitions:

- (a) "Alimony" is the payment of support from one spouse to another for a
 reasonable length of time, pursuant to a court order and for the purpose of providing a spouse in
 need of support periodic payments from a spouse who has the ability to pay it.
- (b) "General Term Alimony" is the periodic payment of support to a recipientspouse who is economically dependent.
- 22 spouse who is expected to become economically self-sufficient by a predicted time, such as,
 23 without limitation, reemployment; completion of job training; or receipt of a sum due from the
 24 payor spouse pursuant to a judgment.
- 26 recipient spouse after a marriage of not more than five years and for the purpose of compensating
 27 the recipient for economic or noneconomic contribution to the financial resources of the payor
 28 spouse, such as enabling the payor spouse to complete an education or job training.
- (e) "Transitional Alimony" is the periodic or one-time payment of support to a recipient spouse after a marriage of not more than five years and for the purpose of transitioning the recipient to an adjusted lifestyle or location as a result of the divorce.

- 32 (f) "Duration of Marriage" is the number of months from the date of legal
 33 marriage to the date of service of a complaint or petition for divorce or separate support duly
 34 filed in a court of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts or another court with jurisdiction to
 35 terminate the marriage. The court shall have discretion to increase the duration of marriage
 36 where there is evidence that the parties' economic marital partnership began during their
 37 cohabitation period prior to the marriage.
- 38 (g) "Full retirement age" shall mean the payor's usual or ordinary retirement age
 39 for United States old-age social security benefits. It shall not mean "early retirement age" if early
 40 retirement is available to the payor or "maximum benefit retirement age" if additional benefits
 41 are available as a result of delayed retirement.
- 42 2. General Term Alimony.
- 43 (a) General Term Alimony shall terminate upon the remarriage of the recipient or 44 the death of either spouse, provided that the court may require the payor spouse to provide life 45 insurance or another form of reasonable security for payment of sums due to the recipient in the 46 event of the payor's death during the alimony term.
- (b) Except upon a court finding that deviation beyond the time limits of this section are required in the interests of justice, where the Duration of Marriage is twenty years or less, General Term Alimony shall terminate no later than a date certain in accordance with durational limits set forth below:
- 51 (1) If the Duration of Marriage is five years, or less, General Term 52 Alimony shall be no greater than one-half the number of months of the marriage.

53 (2) If the Duration of Marriage is ten years or less, but more than five 54 years, General Term Alimony shall be no greater than to sixty percent of the number of months of the marriage. 55 (3) If the Duration of Marriage is fifteen years or less, but more than ten 56 years, General Term Alimony shall be no greater than seventy percent of the number of months 57 of the marriage. 58 59 (4) If the Duration of Marriage is twenty years or less, but more than fifteen years, General Term Alimony shall be no greater than eighty percent of the number of 60 months of the marriage. 61 62 (c) The court shall have discretion to order alimony for an indefinite length of time for marriages longer than twenty years. 64 (d) General Term Alimony shall be suspended, reduced or terminated upon the 65 cohabitation of the recipient spouse when the payor shows that the recipient has maintained a common household, as defined below, with another person for a continuous period of at least 66 three months. 67 68 (1) Persons are deemed to maintain a common household when they share a primary residence together with or without others. In determining whether the recipient is 69 maintaining a common household, the court may consider any of the following factors: 70 71 (i) Oral or written statements or representations made to third parties regarding the relationship of the cohabitants;

73 (ii) The economic interdependence of the couple or economic dependence of one party on the other; 74 75 (iii) The common household couple engaging in conduct and collaborative roles in furtherance of their life together; 77 (iv) The benefit in the life of either or both of the common household parties from their relationship; 79 (v) The community reputation of the parties as a couple; 80 (vi) Other relevant and material factors. 81 (2) An alimony obligation suspended reduced or terminated under this provision may be reinstated upon termination of the recipients common household relationship; 82 83 but, if reinstated it shall not extend beyond the termination date of the original order. 84 (e) Unless the payor and recipient agree otherwise, General Term Alimony may be modified in duration or amount upon a material change of circumstances warranting 85 modification. Modification may be permanent, indefinite, or for a finite duration, as may be 86 appropriate under the circumstances before the court. Nothing in this provision shall be 87 construed to permit alimony reinstatement after the recipient's remarriage, except by the parties' 88 express written agreement. 89 90 (f) Once issued, General Term Alimony orders shall terminate upon the payor attaining the full retirement age when he or she is eligible for the old-age retirement benefit 91 under the United States Old-Age, Disability, and Survivors Insurance Act, 42 U.S.C. 416, as 92

94 not be a reason to extend alimony, provided that: 95 (1) When the court enters an initial alimony judgment, the court may set a different alimony termination date for good cause shown. In granting deviation, the court must enter written findings of the reasons for deviation. 97 98 (2) The court may grant a recipient an extension of an existing alimony order for good cause shown. In granting extension, the court must enter written findings of: 100 (i) A material change of circumstance that occurred after entry 101 of the alimony judgment; and 102 (ii) Reasons for the extension that are supported by clear and 103 convincing evidence. 104 (3) The provisions of this section shall be prospective, such that 105 alimony judgments entered before the effective date of this act shall terminate only as set forth in section 7(b) of this chapter. 107 3. Rehabilitative Alimony 108 (a) Rehabilitative Alimony shall terminate upon the remarriage of the recipient, or the occurrence of a specific event in the future, or the death of either spouse, provided that the 109 court may require the payor to provide reasonable security for payment of sums due to the 110 recipient in the event of the payor's death during the alimony term. 111

amended and as may be amended in the future. The payor's ability to work beyond said age shall

112	(b) The alimony term for rehabilitative alimony shall be no more than five years.
113	Unless the recipient has remarried, the Rehabilitative Alimony term may be extended on a
114	complaint for modification upon a showing of compelling circumstances in the event that:
115	(1) Unforeseen events prevent the recipient spouse from being self-
116	supporting at the end of the term with due consideration to the length of the marriage; and
117	(2) The court finds that the recipient endeavored to become self-
118	supporting; and
119	(3) The payor has continuing ability to pay and no undue burden.
120	(c) The court shall have discretion to modify the amount of periodic
121	Rehabilitative Alimony based upon material change of circumstance within the rehabilitative
122	period.
123	4. Reimbursement Alimony
124	(a) Reimbursement Alimony shall terminate upon the death of the recipient or a
125	date certain.
126	(b) Reimbursement alimony may not be modified by either party.
127	(c) Income guidelines set forth in section 6 (b), below, shall not apply to
128	Reimbursement Alimony.
129	5. Transitional Alimony
130	(a) Transitional Alimony shall terminate upon the death of the recipient or a date
131	certain that is not longer than three years from the date of the parties' divorce, provided that the

- court may require the payor to provide reasonable security for payment of sums due to the recipient in the event of the payor's death during the alimony term
- (b) Transitional alimony may not be modified, extended or replaced by anotherform of alimony.
- 6. Considerations for Setting Form, Amount and Duration of Alimony
- (a) In determining the appropriate form of alimony and in setting the amount and duration of support, a court shall consider: the length of the marriage; age of the parties; health of the parties; both parties' income, employment and employability, including employability through reasonable diligence and additional training, if necessary; economic and non-economic contribution to the marriage; marital lifestyle; ability of each party to maintain the marital lifestyle; lost economic opportunity as a result of the marriage; and such other factors as the court may deem relevant and material.
- (b) Except for Reimbursement Alimony or circumstances warranting deviation for other forms of alimony, the amount of alimony should generally not exceed the recipient's need or 30 percent to 35 percent of the difference between the parties gross incomes established at the time of the order being issued. Subject to section (c) below, income shall be defined as set forth in the Massachusetts Child Support Guidelines, as they may be amended from time-to-time.
- 149 (c) For purposes of setting an alimony order, the court shall exclude from its 150 income calculation:
- 151 (1) Capital gain income and dividend and interest income which derives 152 from assets equitably divided between the parties under Section 34; and

153	(2) Gross income which the court has already considered for setting a
154	child support order whether pursuant to the Massachusetts Child Support Guidelines or
155	otherwise; provided that nothing in this section shall limit the court's discretion to cast a
156	presumptive child support order under the Child Support Guidelines in terms of unallocated or
157	undifferentiated alimony and child support.
158	(d) In setting an initial alimony order, or in modifying an existing order, the court
159	may deviate from duration and amount limits for General Term Alimony and Rehabilitative
160	Alimony upon written findings that deviation is necessary. Grounds for deviation may include:
161	(1) Advanced age; chronic illness; or unusual health circumstances of
162	either party;
163	(2) Tax considerations applicable to the parties;
164	(3) Whether the payor spouse is providing health insurance and the cost
165	of heath insurance for the recipient spouse;
166	(4) Whether the payor spouse has been ordered to secure life insurance
167	for the benefit of the recipient spouse and the cost of such insurance;
168	(5) Sources and amounts of unearned income, including capital gains,
169	interest and dividends, annuity and investment income from assets that were not allocated in the
170	parties divorce;
171	(6) Significant premarital cohabitation that included economic
172	partnership and/or marital separation of significant duration, each of which the court may
173	consider in determining the length of the marriage;

174	(7) A party's inability to provide for his or her own support by reason of
175	physical or mental abuse by the payor;
176	(8) A party's inability to provide for his or her own support by reason of
177	a party's deficiency's of property, maintenance or employment opportunity; and
178	(9) Upon written findings, any other factor that the court deems relevant
179	and material.
180	(e) In determining the incomes of parties with respect to the issue of alimony, the
181	Court may attribute income to a party who is unemployed or underemployed.
182	(f) Where the Court orders alimony concurrent with or subsequent to a child
183	support order, the combined duration of alimony and child support shall not exceed the longer of
184	(i) the alimony duration available at the time of divorce; or (ii) rehabilitative alimony
185	commencing upon the termination of child support.
186	7. Modifications
187	(a) Enactment of this chapter shall not be deemed a material change of
188	circumstance that warrants modification of the amount of existing alimony judgments.
189	(b) Enactment of this chapter shall be deemed a material change of circumstance
190	that warrants modification of existing alimony judgments that exceed the durational limits set

191 forth in section 2, above. Existing alimony awards shall be deemed General Term Alimony, and

shall be modified upon a complaint for modification without additional material change of

193 circumstance, unless the court finds that deviation from the durational limits is warranted.

- (c) Any complaint for modification filed by a payor pursuant to this section solely because the existing alimony judgment exceeds the durational limits set forth in section 2, above, may only be filed pursuant to the following time line:
- 197 (1) Payors who were married to the alimony recipient five (5) years or
 198 less, may file a modification action one (1) year after the effective date of the remaining
 199 provisions of this law.
- 200 (2) Payors who were married to the alimony recipient ten (10) years or 201 less but more than five (5) years may file a modification action two (2) years after the effective 202 date of the remaining provisions of this law.
- 203 (3) Payors who were married to the alimony recipient fifteen (15) years 204 or less but more than ten (10) years may file a modification action three (3) years after the 205 effective date of the remaining provisions of this law.
- 206 (4) Payors who were married to the alimony recipient twenty (20) years 207 or less but more than fifteen (15) years may file a modification action three and one-half (3?) 208 years after the effective date of the remaining provisions of this law.
- 209 (5) Notwithstanding the provisions of subsections (1) through (4) above, 210 any payor who is eligible for the full old age benefit under the United States Old Age, Disability, 211 and Survivor Insurance Act, 42 U.S.C. 416, or who will become eligible for said benefit within 3 212 years from the date this act takes effect, may file a complaint for modification one year after this 213 act takes effect,

214	(e) Under no circumstances shall the enactment of this chapter provide a right to
215	seek or receive modification of an existing alimony judgment in which the parties have agreed
216	that their alimony judgment is not modifiable, or in which the parties have expressed their
217	intention that their agreed alimony provisions survive the judgment and therefore are not
218	modifiable.
219	(f) In the event of the payor's remarriage, income and assets of the payor's spouse
220	shall not be considered in a redetermination of alimony in a modification action.
221	(g) Income from a second job or overtime work shall be presumed immaterial to
222	alimony modification if:
223	(1) A party works more than a single full-time equivalent position; and
224	(2) The second job or overtime commenced after entry of the initial
225	order.
226	8. Security
227	(a) The court may require reasonable security for alimony in the event of the
228	payor's death during the alimony period. Security may include, but is not limited to, maintenance
229	of life insurance.
230	(b) Orders to maintain life insurance shall be based upon due consideration of the
231	following factors: age and insurability of the payor; cost of insurance; amount of the judgment;
232	policies carried during the marriage; duration of the alimony order; prevailing interest rates at the
233	time of the order; other obligations of the payor.

- (c) Orders to maintain security shall be modifiable upon a material change ofcircumstance.
- SECTION 5. Sections 1 through 4, inclusive, shall take effect 90 days from the effective date of this act.