

HOUSE No. 4976

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

The committee of conference on the disagreeing votes of the two branches with reference to the Senate amendment (striking out all after the enacting clause and inserting in place thereof the text contained in Senate document numbered 2826) of the House Bill honoring, empowering, and recognizing our servicemembers and veterans (House, No. 4671), reports recommending passage of the accompanying bill (House, No. 4976). August 1, 2024.

Michael J. Moran	John C. Velis
Gerard J. Cassidy	Michael F. Rush
Steven George Xiarhos	Ryan C. Fattman

HOUSE No. 4976

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

In the One Hundred and Ninety-Third General Court
(2023-2024)

An Act honoring, empowering, and recognizing our servicemembers and veterans.

Whereas, The deferred operation of this act would tend to defeat its purpose, which is to forthwith honor, empower and recognize servicemembers and veterans in the commonwealth, therefore it is hereby declared to be an emergency law, necessary for the immediate preservation of the public convenience.

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. Section 6A of chapter 2 of the General Laws, as appearing in the 2022
2 official edition, is hereby amended by adding the following 3 paragraphs:-

3 (h) In the event of the death of any military service member performing military duty
4 under official orders, who is killed while in an active duty status, including, but not limited to, a
5 member of the United States Army, United States Air Force, United States Coast Guard, United
6 States Marine Corps, United States Navy, United States National Guard, United States Army
7 Reserves and United States Space Force, and residing in the commonwealth, from the day of
8 death until sunset of the day of interment, the flag of the commonwealth shall be flown at half-
9 staff in accordance with such orders or instructions as may be issued by, or at the direction of,
10 the governor.

(i) In the event the remains of a POW or a MIA are repatriated within the commonwealth, from the day of arrival within the commonwealth through the day of interment the flag of the commonwealth shall be flown at half-staff.

(j) Annually, on national POW/MIA recognition day, observed on the third Friday of September, from sunrise to sunset the flag of the commonwealth shall be flown at half-staff.

SECTION 2. Section 34 of said chapter 2, as so appearing, is hereby amended by striking out, in line 2, the word “department” and inserting in place thereof the following words:- executive office.

SECTION 3. Subsection (d) of section 16DD of chapter 6A of the General Laws, as appearing in the 2022 Official Edition, is hereby amended by striking out, in line 29, the second time it appears, the word “department” and inserting in place thereof the following words:- executive office.

SECTION 4. Chapter 6 of the General Laws is hereby amended by inserting after section 15ZZZZZZ the following 2 sections:-

Section. 15AAAAAAA. The governor shall set apart May 22 as United States Merchant Marine Day in recognition of the establishment of the United States Merchant Marine on June 12, 1775, and shall annually issue a proclamation recommend that the day be observed in an appropriate manner by the people.

Section 15BBBBBBB. The governor shall annually set apart December 20 as United States Space Force Day, in recognition of the Space Force’s distinguished history and

spacefaring service, and recommend that the day be observed in an appropriate manner by the people.

SECTION 5. Said section 219 of said chapter 6, as so appearing, is hereby further amended by inserting after the word “leader”, in line 18, the second time it appears, the following words:- ; 1 person appointed by the governor representing a veterans organization in the commonwealth.

SECTION 6. Section 219 of said chapter 6, as so appearing, is hereby amended by striking out, in line 8, the figure “21” and inserting in place thereof the following figure:- 23.

SECTION 7. Said section 219 of said chapter 6, as so appearing, is hereby further amended by inserting after the word “chair”, in line 10, the following words:- ; the secretary of veterans' services or a designee.

SECTION 8. Section 105 of said chapter 6A, as so appearing, is hereby amended by striking out, in line 1, the words “a department” and inserting in place thereof the following words:- an executive office.

SECTION 9. Chapter 6 is hereby amended by inserting after section 15ZZZZZZ the following section:-

Section 15CCCCCCC. (a) The governor shall annually issue a proclamation on Memorial Day in recognition of the sacrifices of Gold Star families in the commonwealth and the following landmarks and bridges shall be illuminated in gold on Memorial Day to commemorate and recognize the lives of those lost in military service, including, but not limited to:

(1) the Gold Star Families Bridge in the city of Lynn;

(2) the Leonard P. Zakim Bunker Hill Memorial Bridge in the cities of Boston and Cambridge;

(3) the Longfellow Bridge in the cities of Boston and Cambridge;

(4) the Fore River Bridge in the city of Quincy and the town of Weymouth; and

(5) the Kenneth F. Burns Memorial Bridge in the city of Worcester and the town of Shrewsbury.

(b) The governor, the department of transportation, the executive office of veterans' services and the Military Friends Foundation shall establish policies and procedures necessary to implement this section.

SECTION 10. Section 4G of chapter 7 of the General Laws, as so appearing, is hereby amended by striking out, in lines 7 to 8, the words "the department of veterans' services,".

SECTION 11. Section 61 of said chapter 7 is hereby amended by striking out, in lines 124 and 125, as so appearing, the word "department" and inserting in place thereof the following words:- executive office.

SECTION 12. Section 78 of chapter 10 of the General Laws is hereby amended by inserting after the word "Reserve", in line 11, as so appearing, the following words:- , United States Space Force.

SECTION 13. Section 17 of chapter 11 of the General Laws, as so appearing, is hereby amended by striking out, in line 21, the word "department" and inserting in place thereof the following words:- executive office.

SECTION 14. Section 1G of chapter 15 of the General Laws, as so appearing, is hereby amended by inserting after the word “students”, in line 86, the following words:- , including military-connected students.

SECTION 15. Chapter 15D of the General Laws is hereby amended by inserting after section 7 the following section:-

Section 7A. For the purposes of this section, “military installation” shall mean a base, camp, post, station, yard, center or other activity under the jurisdiction of the secretary of a United States military department or, in the case of an activity in a foreign country, under the operational control of the secretary of a United States military department or the United States Secretary of Defense, regardless of the duration of operational control.

Notwithstanding any general or special law, rule or regulation to the contrary, sections 6 and 7 shall not apply to a childcare provider on a military installation or a facility licensed or certified as a family child care provider by a branch of the United States Department of Defense or by the United States Coast Guard.

SECTION 16. Said section 1 of said chapter 15E, as so appearing, is hereby further amended by inserting after the word “Force”, in line 69, the following words:- , Space Force.

SECTION 17. Section 49 of chapter 31 of the General Laws, as so appearing, is hereby amended by striking out, in lines 14 and 15, the words “home in the city of Chelsea” and inserting in place thereof the following word:- homes.

SECTION 18. Paragraph (h) of subdivision (1) of section 4 of chapter 32 of the General Laws, as so appearing, is hereby amended by striking out the fourth subparagraph and inserting in place thereof the following subparagraph:-

Notwithstanding the provisions of this chapter or any other general or special law, rule or regulation to the contrary, a member in service of a retirement system as defined in section 1 shall be provided written notice by the retirement board upon entry into service that if they qualify as a veteran who served in the armed forces of the United States, they shall be entitled to credit for active service in the armed services of the United States; provided, however, that such active service shall not be credited until such member, prior to or within 1 year of vesting pursuant to this chapter, has paid into the annuity savings fund of such system, in 1 sum or in installments, upon such terms and conditions as the board may prescribe, makeup payments, for each year of creditable service sought, of an amount equal to 10 per cent of the regular annual compensation of the member when said member entered the retirement system; provided further, that such creditable service shall not be construed to include service for more than 4 years; and provided further, that such creditable service shall not be allowed for any period of active service for which said veteran has received credit pursuant to this paragraph. This paragraph shall apply to national guard and active reserve personnel, both former and present. Creditable service time, both enlisted and commissioned, may be applied toward retirement on a ratio of 5 years of national guard service or 5 years of active reserve service substitutable for each year of active service. National guard and active reserve personnel shall not be precluded from making said purchase if they qualify as a veteran after vesting or if they reach the maximum of 4 years of eligible service purchase after vesting and qualifying as a veteran; provided, however, that they enter into a purchase agreement within 5 years of the last occurring event.

SECTION 19. Section 15 of chapter 33 of the General Laws, as so appearing, is hereby amended by adding the following paragraph:-

(j) There shall be a military spouse liaison appointed by the adjutant general who shall conduct outreach to and advocate on behalf of military spouses residing in the commonwealth. The duties of the military spouse liaison shall include, but not be limited to: (i) providing assistance and information to military spouses seeking professional licenses and credentials or other employment the commonwealth; (ii) coordinating research on issues facing military spouses; (iii) creating informational materials to assist military spouses and their families; (iv) providing recommendations to assist spouses in accessing high quality child care; (v) developing resources in coordination with military installations to increase access to high quality child care for military families; and (vi) assisting military spouses with finding employment in relevant sectors.

SECTION 20. Said chapter 33 is hereby further amended by striking out section 59, as so appearing, and inserting in place thereof the following section:-

Section 59. (a) An employee of the commonwealth in the service of the armed forces of the commonwealth, the armed forces of another state or a reserve component of the armed forces of the United States shall be entitled to receive pay without loss of ordinary remuneration as a public employee during service in the uniformed services, annual training under section 60 or drills and parades under section 61, or for an employee in the service of the armed forces of another state, annual training, drills or parades under a corresponding law of that state, not exceeding 40 days in any federal fiscal year, and shall not lose any seniority or any accrued vacation leave, sick leave, personal leave, compensation time or earned overtime. For the

purposes of this section, "uniformed services" shall have the same meaning as in section 13. For the purposes of this subsection, "day" shall mean any 24-hour period regardless of calendar day.

SECTION 21. Section 67A of chapter 33 of the General Laws, as so appearing, is hereby amended by adding the following paragraph:-

Next of kin of a fallen service member may apply to the adjutant general for a medal of liberty, in a form prescribed by the adjutant general. There shall be within the application for the medal of liberty a notification that informs applicants of their eligibility to receive the medal of liberty license plate, pursuant to section 2 of chapter 90, free of charge upon approval of the application. The notification shall read as follows: IF YOU RECEIVE THE MEDAL OF LIBERTY, YOU ARE ENTITLED TO RECEIVE THE MEDAL OF LIBERTY LICENSE PLATE FREE OF CHARGE. APPLY AT <https://www.mass.gov/doc/application-for-medal-of-liberty-plates>.

SECTION 22. Subsection (b) of article 43 of chapter 33A of the General Laws, as so appearing, is hereby amended by striking out paragraph (2) and inserting in place thereof the following paragraph:-

(2) A person charged with an offense shall not be liable to be punished under article 15 if the Massachusetts National Guard knew, or reasonably should have known, of the offense more than 2 years before the imposition of punishment.

SECTION 23. Section 5 of chapter 59 of the General Laws, as so appearing, is hereby amended by inserting after clause Twenty-second H the following 2 clauses:-

Twenty-second I. In a city or town that accepts this clause and is certified by the commissioner of revenue to be assessing all property at full and fair cash valuation, an abatement granted pursuant clause Twenty-second, Twenty-second A, Twenty-second B, Twenty-second C, Twenty-second E or Twenty-second F shall be increased annually by an amount equal to the increase in the cost of living as determined by the Consumer Price Index for such year. The department of revenue shall annually inform each city or town that accepts this clause of the amount of such increase.

Twenty-second J. In a city or town that accepts this clause and is certified by the commissioner of revenue to be assessing all property at full and fair cash valuation, a taxpayer who otherwise qualifies for an exemption pursuant to clause Twenty-second, Twenty-second A, Twenty-second B, Twenty-second C, Twenty-second E or Twenty-second F shall be granted an additional exemption the amount of which shall not exceed 100 per cent of the exemption for which the taxpayer qualifies, as may be determined by the legislative body of the city or town, subject to its charter, not later than the beginning of the fiscal year to which the additional exemption shall commence; provided, however, that the additional exemption shall be uniform for all taxpayers who qualify for an exemption under said clause Twenty-second, Twenty-second A, Twenty-second B, Twenty-second C, Twenty-second E or Twenty-second F. Once accepted, the amount of the exemption shall continue until amended by the legislative body of the city or town. Notwithstanding any provision of this chapter to the contrary, the exemption shall be in addition to any exemption allowable pursuant to this section; provided, however, the taxable valuation of the property receiving an exemption pursuant to this clause, after all applicable exemptions, shall not be reduced below 10 per cent of its full and fair cash valuation, except through the applicability of clause Eighteenth. Acceptance of this clause by a city or town shall

not increase the amount that the city or town otherwise would have been reimbursed by the commonwealth pursuant to the clause. The additional exemption contained within this clause shall not be implemented in any year in which the city or town has also accepted section 5C1/2.

SECTION 24. Section 1 of chapter 60A of the General Laws, as so appearing, is hereby amended by striking out, in lines 101 to 103, inclusive, the words “medical advisory board established under section 8C of chapter 90 to be permanently disabled”, and inserting in place thereof the following words:- United States Department of Veterans Affairs to: (i) have a combined service-connected disability rating of 100 per cent; or (ii) be individually unemployable due to their service-connected disability.

SECTION 25. Subsection (u) of section 6 of chapter 62 of the General Laws, as so appearing, is hereby amended by striking out, in lines 1113 and 1130, the figure “\$2,000” and inserting in place thereof, in each instance, the following figure:- \$2,500.

SECTION 26. Said subsection (u) of said section 6 of said chapter 62, as so appearing, is hereby further amended by striking out, in line 1119, the words “the day” and inserting in place thereof the following words:- six months after.

SECTION 27. Section 38GG of chapter 63 of the General Laws, as so appearing, is hereby amended by striking out, in lines 8 and 24, the figure “\$2,000” and inserting in place thereof, in each instance, the following figure:- \$2,500.

SECTION 28. Said section 38GG of said chapter 63, as so appearing, is hereby further amended by striking out, in line 13, the words “the day” and inserting in place thereof the following words:- six months after.

SECTION 29. Section 6 of chapter 64H of the General Laws, as so appearing, is hereby amended by striking out subsection (u) and inserting in place thereof the following subsection:-

(u) Sale of a motor vehicle purchased by and for the use of a person who has suffered loss, or permanent loss of use, of both legs or both arms or 1 leg and 1 arm or by and for the use of a veteran who has been determined to be permanently disabled by the medical advisory board established under section 8C of chapter 90 and has been issued a plate displaying the words “Disabled Veteran” or a Purple Heart distinctive registration plate pursuant to section 2J of said chapter 90; provided, however, that this exemption shall apply to 1 motor vehicle owned and registered only for the personal, noncommercial use of such person. A person who is otherwise eligible for this exemption and who was previously issued a Purple Heart distinctive registration plate shall not be required to forfeit such plate to remain eligible for this exemption.

SECTION 30. Chapter 69 of the General Laws is hereby amended by adding the following section:-

Section 38. (a) For the purposes of this section, “military-connected student” shall mean a student who is an unemancipated person whose parent or guardian: (i) is a current or reserve member of the United States Army, United States Navy, United States Marine Corps, United States Coast Guard, United States Space Force, Army Nurse Corps, Navy Nurse Corps, United States Air Force, Air National Guard or Army National Guard; or (ii) a member of a military or reserve force under clause (i) who was killed in the line of duty.

(b) A school district shall provide information about support services available to a military-connected student if their parent or guardian is called or ordered to active duty pursuant to Title 10 or 32 of the United States Code and said parent or guardian notifies the district of

such active duty or a student's parent or guardian is a member of a military or reserve force and was killed in the line of duty. The school district shall include information on school-based support services available to such student related to mental and behavioral health supports.

(c) The department shall coordinate with the military division of the commonwealth to carry out subsection (b), including posting information about military family resources to the department's website and providing informational materials for use by school districts to inform parents and guardians of the supports available under said subsection (b).

(d) A school district may notify a teacher of the enrollment of a military-connected student at the request of the military-connected student's parent or guardian to provide the teacher with the opportunity to monitor a military-connected student's level of academic engagement and provide support as needed.

SECTION 31. Section 4 of chapter 71 of the General Laws, is hereby amended by striking out, in line 32, the word "department", the second time it appears, and inserting in place thereof the following words:- executive office.

SECTION 32. Said section 4 of said chapter 71, as so appearing, is hereby further amended by striking out, in line 39, the word "department" and inserting in place thereof the following words:- executive office.

Sections 33 to 38 have been stricken. Please see special attachment for Joint Rule 11E Errata.

~~SECTION 33. Section 2 of chapter 90 of the General Laws is hereby amended by striking out, in lines 172 to 186, inclusive, as so appearing, the words "pleasure passenger vehicles~~

owned by veterans who, according to the records of the United States Veterans' Administration, has been determined to have a service-connected disability rating of 60 per cent or greater and by reason of service in the armed forces of the United States have suffered loss or permanent loss of use of one or both feet; or loss or permanent loss of use of one or both hands; or permanent impairment of vision of both eyes of the following status: central visual acuity of 20/200 or less in the better eye, with corrective glasses, or central visual acuity of more than 20/200 if there is a field defect in which the peripheral field has contracted to such an extent that the widest diameter of visual field subtends an angular distance no greater than twenty degrees in the better eye, or any other disability or handicap of such veterans which may be determined by the medical advisory board as established by section eight C, and".

SECTION 34. The seventh paragraph of said section 2 of said chapter 90, as so appearing, is hereby amended by striking out the third and fourth sentences.

SECTION 35. Said section 2 of said chapter 90 is hereby further amended by striking out, in lines 246 to 258, inclusive, as so appearing, the words "and the words "Disabled Veteran" for a pleasure passenger vehicle or a pick-up truck owned or leased by and used by a veteran who, according to the records of the United States Veterans' Administration, by reason of service in the armed forces of the United States has suffered loss or permanent loss of use of one or both feet; or loss or permanent loss of use of one or both hands; or permanent impairment of vision of both eyes of the following status: central visual acuity of 20/200 or less in the better eye, with corrective glasses, or central visual acuity of more than 20/200 if there is a field defect in which the peripheral field has contracted to such an extent that the widest diameter of visual field subtends an angular distance no greater than 20 degrees in the better eye, or any other disability or handicap".

264 ~~SECTION 36. Said section 2 of said chapter 90 is hereby further amended by striking out~~
265 ~~the twelfth paragraph, as so appearing.~~

266 ~~SECTION 37. Said section 2 of said chapter 90 is hereby further amended by striking out~~
267 ~~the fifteenth through seventeenth paragraphs, inclusive, as so appearing.~~

268 ~~SECTION 38. Said section 2 of said chapter 90 is hereby further amended by striking out~~
269 ~~the nineteenth through twenty-second paragraphs, inclusive, as so appearing.~~

270 SECTION 39. The twenty-third paragraph of said section 2 of chapter 90, as so
271 appearing, is hereby amended by adding the following sentence:- The registrar, in consultation
272 with the adjutant general of the Massachusetts national guard, shall notify all past recipients of
273 the medal of liberty, established pursuant to said section 67A of said chapter 33, of their
274 eligibility for the medal of liberty license plate through a letter, which shall include the
275 application for the medal of liberty license plate.

276 SECTION 40. Section 33 of said chapter 90, as appearing in the 2022 Official Edition, is
277 hereby amended by striking out paragraph (29) and inserting in place thereof the following
278 paragraph:-

279 (29) No fee shall be exacted for the registration of any vehicle owned by a veteran who
280 has been determined by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs to: (i) have a
281 combined service-connected disability rating of 100 per cent; or (ii) be individually
282 unemployable due to their service-connected disability, and no fee shall be exacted for the
283 issuance to such disabled veteran of a license to operate such vehicle.

SECTION 41. Section 244 of chapter 111 of the General Laws, as inserted by section 14 of chapter 154 of the acts of 2022, is hereby amended by striking out, in lines 2, 28, the second time it appears, 35 and 38, the word “commissioner” and inserting in place thereof, in each instance, the following word:- secretary.

SECTION 42. Said section 244 of said chapter 111, inserted by said section 14 of said chapter 154, is hereby further amended by striking out, in line 43, as appearing in the 2022 Official Edition, the word “department” and inserting in place thereof the following words:- executive office.

SECTION 43. Section 244 of said chapter 111, inserted by section 34 of chapter 177 of the acts of 2023, is hereby repealed.

SECTION 44. Chapter 111 of the General Laws is hereby amended by adding the following section:-

Section 245. The department shall administer an initiative to increase public awareness of and education on the availability of the extreme risk protection order process established pursuant to sections 131R to 131Y, inclusive, of chapter 140, to remove a firearm from the control, ownership or possession of an individual who poses a risk of causing bodily injury to themselves or others. The initiative shall focus on the heightened risk of suicide associated with the possession of a firearm and shall include information on: (i) eligibility to petition for an extreme risk protection order; (ii) the procedure to petition for an extreme risk protection order; (iii) options to voluntarily surrender a firearm to a law enforcement agency; and (iv) the availability of existing legal resources and support services for a potential petitioner.

SECTION 45. Subsection (b) of section 3 of chapter 111C of the General Laws, as appearing in the 2022 Official Edition, is hereby amended by striking out clause (26) and inserting in place thereof the following 2 clauses:-

(26) establish standards, which may include following National Registry of EMTs' standards, for determining the extent to which the education and training requirements of veterans and military medics of the United States armed forces are substantially equivalent to the course and training requirements of emergency medical technicians in the commonwealth;

(27) take any other action consistent with its role as state lead agency for EMS.

SECTION 46. Said chapter 111C is hereby further amended by inserting after section 9A the following section:-

Section 9B. (a) The department may grant a waiver to veterans or military medics of the United States armed forces applying to be an emergency medical technician consistent with standards established pursuant to clause (26) of subsection (b) of section 3 if the completed courses or training required by the United States armed forces are substantially equivalent to training consistent with this chapter for emergency medical technicians.

(b) The applicant for a waiver pursuant to subsection (a) shall submit sufficient proof of completion of the substantially equivalent courses and training to the department.

(c) No veteran or military medic applying to be an emergency medical technician who has completed substantially equivalent emergency training with the United States armed forces, as determined by the department, shall be required to complete the same training for EMT certification or licensing in the commonwealth.

(d) The department shall issue a verification of emergency medical technician education and training equivalency if the department determines the completed courses or training required by the United States armed forces are substantially equivalent to training consistent with this chapter for emergency medical technicians.

SECTION 47. Said chapter 115 is hereby further amended by adding the following section:-

Section 18. (a) As used in this section, the following words shall have the following meanings unless the context clearly requires otherwise:

“Compensation”, payment of any money, thing of value or financial benefit.

“Person”, an individual, corporation, business trust, estate, trust, partnership, limited liability company, association, joint venture, public corporation, government or governmental subdivision, agency or instrumentality or any other legal or commercial entity.

“Veterans benefits matter”, the preparation, presentation or prosecution of any claim affecting any person who has filed or expressed an intent to file a claim for any benefit, program, service, commodity, function or status, entitlement to which is determined under the laws and regulations administered by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs or Department of Defense pertaining to veterans, their dependents, their survivors and any other individual eligible for such benefits.

(b) In regard to a veterans benefits matter, no person shall: (i) receive compensation for: (A) preparation, presentation, prosecution, advising, consulting or assisting any individual with regard to any veterans benefits matter, except as permitted under federal law; or (B) referring a

veteran to another person to prepare, present, prosecute, advise, consult or assist such veteran with any veterans benefits matter; (ii) guarantee, either directly or by implication, that any individual is certain to receive specific veterans benefits or that any individual is certain to receive a specific level, percentage or amount of veterans benefits; or (iii) receive excessive or unreasonable fees under 38 C.F.R 14.636(e) as compensation for advising or assisting any veteran with any veterans benefits matter.

(c) A violation of this section shall also be a violation of chapter 93A.

SECTION 48. Said section 1 of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby further amended by striking out the definition of “veteran” and inserting in place thereof the following definition:-

“Veteran”, any person who (a) is a veteran as defined in clause Forty-third of section 7 of chapter 4; or (b) served on active duty in the armed forces for at least 90 days and whose last discharge or release was under conditions other than dishonorable; or (c) served on active duty, to include active duty solely for training purposes, in the armed forces, and was awarded a service-connected disability or who died in such service under conditions other than dishonorable; or (d) served in the national guard or as a reservist in any branch of the armed forces, including active duty solely for training purposes, and was awarded a service-connected disability or who died in such service under conditions other than dishonorable; or (e) is determined to be a veteran according to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs; provided, that in any case, the service of such person qualified under clause (a) through clause (e) was entered into or served in Massachusetts, or such person has resided in the commonwealth for 1 day,

368 except for the purpose of determining the residential eligibility of a deceased veteran's
369 dependents.

370 SECTION 49. Said chapter 115 is hereby amended by inserting after section 9 the
371 following section:-

372 Section 9A. The executive office of veterans' services shall operate, maintain and expand
373 the Massachusetts Veterans' Memorial cemetery located in the city known as the town of
374 Agawam and the Massachusetts Veterans' Memorial cemetery located in the town of
375 Winchendon and may add new cemetery locations, subject to the availability of funds, to meet
376 veterans' and veteran dependents' needs; provided, however, that the office shall maintain the
377 cemetery grounds, facilities and infrastructure and shall manage the burial and interment
378 services. The executive office may adopt additional rules, regulations and policies as necessary
379 to fulfill its responsibilities and ensure the proper functioning of the cemeteries under its control.

380 SECTION 50. Subsection (c) of section 73B of chapter 272 of the General Laws, as
381 appearing in the 2022 Official Edition, is hereby amended by striking out, in line 18, the second
382 time it appears, and in line 23, the word "department" and inserting in place thereof, in each
383 instance, the following words:- executive office.

384 SECTION 551. Section 11 of chapter 276A of the General Laws, as so appearing, is
385 hereby amended by striking out, in lines 6 and 13 the words "the department" and inserting in
386 place thereof, in each instance, the following words:- the executive office.

387 SECTION 52. Section 3 of chapter 71 of the acts of 1996, as amended by section 2 of
388 chapter 468 of the acts of 2002, is hereby further amended by striking out the second paragraph.

SECTION 53. Notwithstanding any general or special law to the contrary, any member of a retirement system who is a member in service and a veteran who failed to make the purchase authorized in paragraph (h) of subdivision (1) of section 4 of chapter 32 of the General Laws pursuant to chapter 71 of the acts of 1996, as amended, shall be given a 1-time opportunity to apply to the retirement system to make said purchase within 1 year from the effective date of this act. Each retirement system shall provide written notice to all members in service of their potential eligibility for this purchase within 90 days of the effective date of this act.

SECTION 54. Section 2EEEEEE of chapter 29 of the General Laws, as so appearing, is hereby amended by striking out, in line 14, the words “department of veterans” and inserting in place thereof the following words:- executive office of veterans’.

SECTION 55. Section 41 of said chapter 6, as appearing in the 2022 Official Edition, is hereby amended by striking out, in lines 47 and 94, the word “department” and inserting in place thereof, in each instance, the following words:- executive office.

SECTION 556. Section 1 of chapter 115 of the General Laws, as so appearing, is hereby amended by striking out the definition of “Dependent” and inserting in place thereof the following definition:-

“Dependent”, the spouse, widowed person, child or parent of a veteran, including any person who stood in the relationship of a parent to such veteran for the 5 years next preceding the commencement of the veteran’s wartime service; provided, that no child of a veteran who is older than 18 years of age shall be deemed a dependent, unless the child meets the criteria established for emancipation pursuant to section 28 of chapter 208 or section 9 of chapter 209C

410 or unless the child is mentally or physically unable to support themselves after attaining the age
411 of 23.

412 SECTION 57. Said section 1 of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby further
413 amended by striking out, in line 25, the word “his”, each time it appears, and inserting in place
414 thereof, in each instance, the following words:- the applicant’s.

415 SECTION 58. Said section 1 of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby further
416 amended by striking out, in line 26, the word “he” and inserting in place thereof the following
417 words:- the applicant.

418 SECTION 59. Said section 1 of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby further
419 amended by striking out, in lines 54 and 55, the words “as defined in clause Forty-third of
420 section seven of chapter four,”.

421 SECTION 60. Section 2 of said chapter 115, as appearing in the 2022 Official Edition, is
422 hereby amended by striking out, in lines 1 and 2, the words “as defined in clause Forty-third of
423 section seven of chapter four”.

424 SECTION 61. Said section 2 of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby amended by
425 striking out, in line 39, the word “his” and inserting in place thereof the following words:- the
426 person’s.

427 SECTION 62. Said section 2 of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby further
428 amended by striking out, in line 45, the word “his” and inserting in place thereof the following
429 words:- a party’s.

430

431 SECTION 63. Said section 2 of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby further
432 amended by striking out, in lines 7 and 20, the word “his” and inserting in place thereof, in each
433 instance, the following word:- the secretary’s.

434 SECTION 64. Said section 2 of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby further
435 amended by striking out, in lines 8, 12, 20, 66, 82, 103, 123, 131, 139 and 150, the word “He”
436 and inserting in place thereof, in each instance, the following words:-The secretary.

437 SECTION 65. Said section 2 of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby further
438 amended by striking out, in lines 12, 63, 71, 89, 98, 113, 118 and 119, the word “him” and
439 inserting in place thereof, in each instance, the following words:- the secretary.

440 SECTION 66. Said section 2 of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby further
441 amended by striking out, in lines 13, 14, 61, 118, 125, 129, 134 and 142, the word “he” and
442 inserting in place thereof, in each instance, the following words:- the secretary.

443 SECTION 67. Said section 2 of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby further
444 amended by striking out, in line 82, the words “him or by his” and inserting in place thereof the
445 following words:- the secretary or the secretary’s.

446 SECTION 68. Said section 2 of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby further
447 amended by striking out, in line 98, the word “his” and inserting in place thereof the following
448 words:- the applicant’s.

449 SECTION 69. Said section 2 of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby further
450 amended by striking out, in lines 153 and 156, the word “his” and inserting in place thereof, in
451 each instance, the following word:- a.

SECTION 70. Said section 2 of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby further amended by striking out, in line 155, the word “chairman” and inserting in place thereof the following word:- chair.

SECTION 71. Said section 2 of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby further amended by adding the following paragraph:-

Annually, not later than November 1, the secretary shall report on the activities of the office and data collected related to veterans, including, but not limited to: (i) the number of recipients of state veteran benefits and applicants for benefits, delineated by municipality and demographic; (ii) a breakdown on the outcome of benefit appeal decisions pursuant to this section; (iii) a summary of the office’s outreach to veterans on the availability of and process for applying for benefits; (iv) demographic and regional information available on the veteran population in the commonwealth; (v) directives in effect; and (vi) any legislative recommendations necessary to better serve veterans and their families in the commonwealth. The office shall publicly post the report on the office’s website and submit the report to the joint committee on veterans and federal affairs, the clerks of the senate and house of representatives and the senate and house committees on ways and means.

SECTION 72. Said section 2 of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby further amended by adding the following 3 paragraphs:-

The secretary shall provide, subject to appropriation, a medical assistance benefit in addition to the other benefits provided in this chapter. A recipient of the medical assistance benefit shall, where applicable, make use of private, state or federally-funded resources before seeking aid under this paragraph. The medical assistance benefit shall include, but not be limited

to, covering the cost of necessary medical visits, procedures, prescriptions and other such treatments as the secretary shall determine through regulations. The secretary shall, by regulation or otherwise, make provision to keep the program efficient and economical.

The secretary shall provide, subject to appropriation, a behavioral health assistance benefit in addition to the other benefits provided in this chapter. A recipient of the behavioral health assistance benefit shall, where applicable, make use of private, state or federally-funded resources before seeking aid under this paragraph. The behavioral health assistance benefit shall include, but not be limited to, coverage for the cost of those necessary outpatient behavioral health assessments, evaluations, visits, prescriptions and other such treatment as the secretary shall determine through regulations. The secretary shall, by regulation or otherwise, make provision to keep the program efficient and economical.

The secretary shall provide, subject to appropriation, a dental assistance benefit in addition to the other benefits provided in this chapter. A recipient of the dental assistance benefit shall, where applicable, make use of private, state or federally-funded resources before seeking aid under this paragraph. The dental assistance benefit shall include, but not be limited to, coverage for the cost of those necessary medical visits, procedures, prescriptions and other such treatments as the secretary shall determine through regulations. The secretary shall, by regulation or otherwise, make provision to keep the program efficient and economical.

SECTION 73. The third paragraph of said section 2 of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby amended by inserting after the third sentence the following 3 sentences:- Any claimant aggrieved by a decision of a veterans' agent regarding veterans benefits or by the failure of a city or town to render adequate veterans' benefits or to take, approve or deny an application for

496 veterans' benefits within 45 days of receiving such application or the claimant requesting to
497 apply for benefits or any person aggrieved by the termination or reduction of such benefits shall
498 have the right to appeal to the secretary. An appeal shall be filed with the secretary within 90
499 days of the claimant's receipt of a written adverse notice. An informal administrative hearing of
500 such appeal shall be conducted to review the facts and circumstances giving rise to the appeal.
501 The secretary shall issue a decision on the appeal within 90 days after the informal
502 administrative hearing has closed.

503 SECTION 74. Section 2B of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby amended by
504 striking out, in lines 7 and 8, each time it appears, the word "his" and inserting in place thereof,
505 in each instance, the following word:- a.

506 SECTION 75. Said chapter 115 is hereby further amended by inserting after section 2D
507 the following section:-

508 Section 2E. (a) The secretary, in consultation with the secretary of labor and workforce
509 development, shall create and distribute a veterans' benefits and services notice.

510 (b) The veterans' benefits and services notice shall include information regarding the
511 services and resources available to veterans, including, but not limited to: (i) contact and website
512 information for the executive office of veterans' services and the United States Department of
513 Veterans Affairs; (ii) substance abuse and mental health treatment resources; (iii) educational,
514 workforce and training resources; (iv) tax benefits resources; (v) information about obtaining a
515 veteran indicator on a state driver's license or identification card; (vi) information about
516 eligibility for unemployment insurance benefits under state and federal law; (vii) legal services

517 resources; and (viii) contact information for the United States Department of Veterans Affairs
518 Veterans Crisis Line.

519 (c) Every employer in the commonwealth with more than 50 full-time employees shall
520 post the notice created pursuant to subsection (a) in a conspicuous location in the workplace
521 accessible to employees and shall distribute the notice to each employee at the start of
522 employment and on an annual basis.

523 SECTION 76. Section 3 of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby amended by
524 striking out, in line 17, the word “his”.

525 SECTION 77. Said section 3 of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby further
526 amended by striking out, in line 18, the words “in behalf of a civil war” and inserting in place
527 thereof the following words:- on behalf of a.

528 SECTION 78. Said section 3 of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby further
529 amended by striking out, in line 19, the words “,under the provisions of section two”.

530 SECTION 79. Said section 3 of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby further
531 amended by striking out, in lines 18 and 19, the words “his wife or widow” and inserting in place
532 thereof the following words:- a veteran’s spouse or widowed person.

533 SECTION 80. Said section 3 of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby further
534 amended by striking out, in line 20, the word “him” and inserting in place thereof the following
535 words:- the secretary.

536 SECTION 81. Said section 3 of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby further
537 amended by striking out, in line 20, the word “his” and inserting in place thereof the following
538 words:- the agent’s.

539 SECTION 82. Said section 3 of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby further
540 amended by striking out, in line 24, the word “he” and inserting in place thereof the following
541 words:- the veteran.

542 SECTION 83. Said section 3 of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby further
543 amended by striking out, in line 24, the word “his” and inserting in place thereof the following
544 words:- the veteran’s.

545 SECTION 84. Said section 3 of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby further
546 amended by striking out, in lines 25 and 27, the word “him” and inserting in place thereof, in
547 each instance, the following words:- the agent.

548 SECTION 85. Section 4 of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby amended by
549 striking out, in lines 4, 5, 8 and 20, the word “his” and inserting in place thereof, in each
550 instance, the following words:- the applicants.

551 SECTION 86. Said section 4 of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby further
552 amended by striking out, in line 14, the word “widow” and inserting in place thereof the
553 following words:- widowed person.

554 SECTION 87. Section 5 of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby amended by
555 striking out, in lines 2 and 55, the word “he” and inserting in place thereof, in each instance, the
556 following words:- the veteran.

557 SECTION 88. Said section 5 of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby further
558 amended by striking out, in lines 5 to 10, the words “unless he has actually resided within the
559 commonwealth continuously for three years next preceding the date of his application for such
560 benefits, nor unless the veteran of whom he is a dependent has actually resided within the
561 commonwealth continuously for three years next preceding the date of such dependent’s
562 application for such benefits” and inserting in place thereof the following words:- except upon
563 like terms.

564 SECTION 89. The seventh paragraph of said section 5 of said chapter 115, as so
565 appearing, is hereby amended by adding the following sentence:- An increase in income from a
566 cost-of-living adjustment made to social security, supplemental security income or social
567 security disability insurance shall not serve to render any recipient ineligible for benefits under
568 this chapter in the year that the cost-of-living adjustment was issued.

569 SECTION 90. Said section 5 of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby further
570 amended by striking out, in lines 4, 16, 25, 26, 45, 59, 62, 63, 65 and 66, the word “his” and
571 inserting in place thereof, in each instance, the following word:- their.

572 SECTION 91. Said section 5 of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby further
573 amended by striking out, in lines 22 and 74, the word “him” and inserting in place thereof, in
574 each instance, the following word:- them.

575 SECTION 92. Said section 5 of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby further
576 amended by striking out, in line 27, the word “him” and inserting in place thereof the following
577 words:- the applicant.

578 SECTION 93. Said section 5 of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby further
579 amended by striking out, in line 24, the word “himself” and inserting in place thereof the
580 following word:- themselves.

581 SECTION 94. Said section 5 of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby further
582 amended by striking out in lines 39, 43, 51, 54, 102 and 103, the word “his” and inserting in
583 place thereof, in each instance, the following words:- the veteran’s.

584 SECTION 95. Said section 5 of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby further
585 amended by striking out, in line 42, the word “his” and inserting in place thereof the following
586 words:- the secretary’s.

587 SECTION 96. Said section 5 of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby further
588 amended by striking out, in line 57, the word “him” and inserting in place thereof the following
589 words:- the veteran.

590 SECTION 97. Said section 5 of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby further
591 amended by striking out, in line 59, the word “He” and inserting in place thereof the following
592 word:- They.

593 SECTION 98. Said section 5 of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby further
594 amended by striking out, in line 61, the word “he” and inserting in place thereof the following
595 word:- they.

596 SECTION 99. Said section 5 of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby further
597 amended by striking out, in line 92, the word “his” and inserting in place thereof the following
598 words:- the veterans’ agent’s.

599 SECTION 100. Said section 5 of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby further
600 amended by striking out, in lines 95, 99 and 103, the word “mother” and inserting in place
601 thereof, in each instance, the following word:- parent.

602 SECTION 101. Said section 5 of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby further
603 amended by striking out, in line 100, the word “her” and inserting in place thereof the following
604 words:- the parent’s.

605 SECTION 102. Said section 5 of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby further
606 amended by striking out, in line 106, the word “him” and inserting in place thereof the following
607 words:- the secretary.

608 SECTION 103. The second paragraph of said section 5 of said chapter 115, as so
609 appearing, is hereby amended by adding the following sentence:- A city or town may, upon
610 recommendation of the veterans’ agent and with written authorization from the veteran or
611 dependent, disburse veterans’ benefits under this section by direct deposit to a financial
612 institution of the veteran or dependent’s choice or by mail.

613 SECTION 104. Section 5A of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby amended by
614 striking out, in lines 2, 8, 11, 57, 60 and 63 and 64, the words “mother or father” and inserting in
615 place thereof, in each instance, the following word:- parent.

616 SECTION 105. Said section 5A of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby further
617 amended by striking out, in lines 16 and 17, the words “mother’s or father’s” and inserting in
618 place thereof the following word:- parent’s.

619 SECTION 106. Said section 5A of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby further
620 amended by striking out, in line 33, the word “him” and inserting in place thereof the following
621 word:- the person.

622 SECTION 107. Said section 5A of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby further
623 amended by striking out, in line 40, the words “mother and father” and inserting in place thereof
624 the following word:- parents.

625 SECTION 108. Said section 5A of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby further
626 amended by striking out, in line 41, the words “in his” and inserting in place thereof the
627 following words:- within the secretary’s.

628 SECTION 109. Said section 5A of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby further
629 amended by striking out, in line 45, the word “his” and inserting in place thereof the following
630 words:- the secretary’s.

631 SECTION 110. Said section 5A of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby further
632 amended by striking out, in lines 47 and 48, the words “the petition in his own name” and
633 inserting in place thereof the following words:- a petition.

634 SECTION 111. Section 6 of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby amended by
635 striking out, in line 3, the word “him”.

636 SECTION 112. Said section 6 of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby further
637 amended by striking out, in line 12, each time it appears, the word “him” and inserting in place
638 thereof, in each instance, the following words:- the secretary.

639 SECTION 113. Said section 6 of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby further
640 amended by striking out, in lines 15 and 19, the word “he” and inserting in place thereof, in each
641 instance, the following words:- the secretary.

642 SECTION 114. Section 6A of said chapter 115 is hereby repealed.

643 SECTION 115. Section 6B of said chapter 115, as appearing in the 2022 Official Edition,
644 is hereby amended by striking out, in lines 19, 28 and 35, the words “the sum of \$2,000” and
645 inserting in place thereof, in each instance, the following figure:- \$2,250.

646 SECTION 116. Said section 6B of said chapter 115 is hereby further amended by striking
647 out the figure “\$2,250”, inserted by section 101, each time it appears, and inserting in place
648 thereof, in each instance, the following figure:- \$2,500.

649 SECTION 117. Said section 6B of said chapter 115, as appearing in the 2022 Official
650 Edition, is hereby further amended by striking out, in lines 20, 29 and 35 and 36 the words “two
651 equal payments on August and February 1” and inserting in place thereof, in each instance, the
652 following words:- “1 payment on August 1.”

653 SECTION 118. Said section 6B of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby further
654 amended by striking out, in lines 21 and 30, the word “his” and inserting in place thereof, in each
655 instance, the following words:- the veteran’s.

656 SECTION 119. Section 7 of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby amended by
657 striking out, in line 4, the word “He” and inserting in place thereof the following words:- The
658 burial agent.

659 SECTION 120. Said section 7 of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby further
660 amended by striking out, in line 8, the words “his wife, or his widow” and inserting in place
661 thereof the following words:- the veteran’s spouse, or widowed person.

662 SECTION 121. Said section 7 of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby further
663 amended by striking out, in line 10, the word “him” and inserting in place thereof the following
664 words:- the burial agent.

665 SECTION 122. Said section 7 of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby further
666 amended by striking out, in lines 12 and 14, the word “he” and inserting in place thereof, in each
667 instance, the following words:- the burial agent.

668 SECTION 123. Said section 7 of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby further
669 amended by striking out, in line 17 and 20, the word “his” and inserting in place thereof, in each
670 instance, the following words:- the person’s.

671 SECTION 124. Section 8 of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby amended by
672 striking out, in line 23, the words “widow, or widower” and inserting in place thereof the
673 following words:- widowed person.

674 SECTION 125. Section 9 of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby amended by
675 striking out the first sentence and inserting in place thereof the following sentence:- The mayor
676 of every city and the select board of every town shall appoint a resident of such city or town who
677 shall be a veteran as a veterans’ graves officer for a term to be determined by the appointing
678 authority; provided, however, that said term shall not exceed five years; provided further, that if
679 no qualified, willing and able veteran seeks such appointment, a spouse of a veteran or a member
680 of a Gold Star family may be appointed as a veterans' graves officer.

681 SECTION 126. Section 10 of said chapter 115, as appearing in the 2022 Official Edition,
682 is hereby amended by striking out, in line 23, the word “his” and inserting in place thereof the
683 following word:- such director’s.

684 SECTION 127. Said section 10 of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby further
685 amended by striking out, in lines 31 and 32, the words “duties of his office” and inserting in
686 place thereof the following words:- office’s duties.

687 SECTION 128. Said section 10 of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby further
688 amended by striking out, in line 32, the word “his” and inserting in place thereof the following
689 words:- the director’s.

690 SECTION 129. Said section 10 of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby further
691 amended by striking out, in line 37, the words “his duties as treasurer of the district” and
692 inserting in place thereof the following words:- the district treasurer’s duties.

693 SECTION 130. Section 11 of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby amended by
694 striking out, in line 2, the word “his” and inserting in place thereof the following words:- the
695 mayors.

696 SECTION 131. Said section 11 of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby further
697 amended by striking out, in lines 3 and 4, the word “chairman” and inserting in place thereof the
698 following word:- chair.

699 SECTION 132. Said section 11 of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby further
700 amended by striking out, in line 5, the word “his” and inserting in place thereof the following
701 words:- the town manager’s.

SECTION 133. Said section 11 of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby further amended by striking out, in line 24, the word “his” and inserting in place thereof the following words:- the treasurer’s.

SECTION 134. Section 15 of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby amended by striking out, in line 4, the words “he, and his duly accredited agents,” and inserting in place thereof the following words:- the director and the director’s agents.

SECTION 135. Said section 15 of said chapter 115, as so appearing, is hereby further amended by striking out, in line 11, the word “his” and inserting in place thereof the following word:- a.

SECTION 136. Section 16 of said chapter 115, inserted by section 53 of chapter 126 of the acts of 2022, is hereby amended by inserting after the first sentence the following sentence:- The board shall ensure that veterans receive state-based veteran benefits if they receive: (i) an other than honorable discharge on the basis of sex, race, color, religious creed, national origin, age, genetic information, ancestry, marital status or disability; or (ii) any United States Department of Veterans Affairs category eligible for a discharge upgrade, including, but not limited to, mental health conditions, military sexual trauma and traumatic brain injury. The executive office of veterans’ services shall promulgate rules and regulations to carry out this section.

SECTION 137. Said section 16 of said chapter 115, as so inserted, is hereby further amended by striking out, in lines 37, 40 and 50, the word “department” and inserting in place thereof the following words:- executive office.

SECTION 138. Section 16 of said chapter 115, inserted by section 18 of chapter 154 of the acts of 2022, is hereby repealed.

SECTION 139. Said chapter 115 is hereby amended by adding the following section:-

Section 18. (a) The commissioner, in consultation with the commissioner of public health and the adjutant general of the Massachusetts national guard, shall contact all members of the Massachusetts national guard and all known veterans and members of the United States armed forces residing in the commonwealth who may be eligible to participate in the United States Department of Veterans Affairs' Airborne Hazards and Open Burn Pit Registry, including, but not limited, those who may have served in: (i) Operation Enduring Freedom, Operation Iraqi Freedom or Operation New Dawn; (ii) Djibouti, Africa on or after September 11, 2001; (iii) Afghanistan on or after September 11, 2001; (iv) Operation Desert Shield or Operation Desert Storm; or (v) in the Southwest Asia theater of operations on or after August 2, 1990. Veterans or service members contacted shall be encouraged to join the United States Department of Veterans Affairs' Airborne Hazards and Open Burn Pit Registry and shall be provided with contact information for the United States Department of Veterans Affairs' Airborne Hazards and Open Burn Pit Registry and a copy of the informational pamphlet created by the commissioner of public health pursuant to subsection (b) of section 244 of chapter 111.

(b) The commissioner shall create a database of self-identifying service members and veterans who have been exposed to open burn pits or other airborne hazards, which shall include the name, address, electronic address, phone number, location and period of service and other information as deemed necessary. Such information shall be used only for the purposes of communicating information about exposure to toxic airborne chemicals and fumes caused by

745 open burn pits or other airborne hazards to service members and veterans. The database,
746 materials or other information shall be confidential and privileged, shall not be subject to chapter
747 66, or clause Twenty-sixth of section 7 of chapter 4 and shall not be subject to subpoena,
748 discovery or introduction into evidence in any private civil action.

749 SECTION 140. Section 9 of chapter 115A of the General Laws, as appearing in the 2022
750 Official Edition, is hereby amended by striking out, in line 3, the words “home in the city of
751 Chelsea” and inserting in place thereof the following word:- homes.

752 SECTION 141. Section 12 of said chapter 115A, as so appearing, is hereby amended by
753 striking out, in line 1, the word “department” and inserting in place thereof the following words:-
754 executive office.

755 SECTION 142. Said section 12 of said chapter 115A, as so appearing, is hereby further
756 amended by striking out, in line 22, the words “department of veterans” and inserting in place
757 thereof the following words:- executive office of veterans’.

758 SECTION 143. Chapter 115A of the General Laws is hereby amended by striking out
759 section 1, as appearing in the 2022 Official Edition, and inserting in place thereof the following
760 section:-

761 Section 1. A person who is a veteran as defined in section 1 of chapter 115 shall be
762 entitled to out-patient treatment at, admission to and hospitalization in a state-operated veterans'
763 home, subject to the provisions of section 3.

764 SECTION 144. Section 3 of chapter 115B of the General Laws, as so appearing, is
765 hereby amended by striking out, in line 16 to 18, inclusive, the words “home in the city of

766 Chelsea; and the chair of the board of trustees of the veterans' home in the city of Holyoke" and
767 inserting in place thereof the following words:- homes

768 SECTION 145. Section 1 of chapter 15E of the General Laws, as appearing in the 2022
769 Official Edition, is hereby amended by striking out, in line 6, the word "sections" and inserting
770 in place thereof the following word:- chapters.

771 SECTION 146. Section 51B of chapter 119 of the General Laws, as so appearing, is
772 hereby amended by striking out, in lines 17 and 18, the words "and (vi) all other pertinent facts
773 or matters" and inserting in place thereof the following:- (vi) the military status of the parents,
774 guardian or caregiver of the child and, if applicable, of the spouse or intimate partner of the
775 parent, guardian or caregiver of the child; and (vii) all other pertinent facts or matters.

776 SECTION 147. Said section 51B of said chapter 119 is hereby further amended by
777 adding the following subsections:-

778 (s) The department shall provide notice to appropriate military authorities about an
779 allegation of an individual subject to a 51A report with a military status in accordance with
780 subsection (t) of section 51B.

781 (t)(i) For the purposes of this section, "family advocacy program" shall mean the program
782 established by the United States Department of Defense for the prevention of and response to
783 child abuse and neglect and domestic abuse and intimate partner violence in military families.(ii)
784 The commissioner shall enter into a memorandum of understanding with the family advocacy
785 program at military installations located in the commonwealth with respect to 51A reports and
786 data collected for the investigation pursuant to subsection (b) of section 51B and reported
787 pursuant to military status pursuant to subsection(s) of section 51B. The memorandum of

788 understanding shall establish procedures and protocols for matters, including, but not limited to:
789 (a) identifying an individual subject to a 51A report as military personnel; (b) identifying
790 appropriate circumstances for reporting to the family advocacy program without reducing the
791 likelihood of reporting or creating undue risk to the health or wellbeing of the spouse, intimate
792 partner, caregiver or child of the military personnel; (c) reporting to the family advocacy
793 program when an investigation implicating military personnel has been initiated; and (d)
794 maintaining confidentiality requirements under state and federal law.

795 SECTION 148. The second paragraph of section 39A of chapter 129 of the General
796 Laws, as so appearing, is hereby amended by inserting after the word, “auctions” the following
797 sentence:- “,or to a professional service dog organization accredited by Assistance Dogs
798 International and headquartered in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.”

799 SECTION 149. (a) There shall be a special commission to study post-traumatic stress
800 disorder in the commonwealth.

801 (b) The commission shall consist of: the secretary of health and human services, or a
802 designee, who shall serve as chair; the secretary of public safety and security, or a designee; the
803 secretary of veterans’ services, or a designee; the commissioner of mental health, or a designee;
804 the house and senate chairs of the joint committee on mental health, substance use and recovery;
805 a representative of the National Guard appointed by the adjutant general of the Massachusetts
806 National Guard; and 9 members to be appointed by the secretary of health and human services, 1
807 of whom shall be an expert from the Anxiety and Traumatic Stress Disorders Laboratory at
808 Harvard University in consultation with their relevant specialty chapters, 1 of whom shall be a
809 representative of Boston Children's Hospital, 1 of whom shall be a representative of the

810 Massachusetts Police Association, Inc., 1 of whom shall be a representative of Jane Doe Inc.:
811 The Massachusetts Coalition Against Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence, 1 of whom shall be
812 a representative from Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition, Inc., 1 of
813 whom shall be a representative of Professional Fire Fighters of Massachusetts, 1 of whom shall
814 be a representative of the Massachusetts Corrections Officers Federated Union, 1 of whom shall
815 be a representative of a research advocacy or support organization primarily serving individuals
816 with post-traumatic stress disorder and 1 of whom shall be a representative of Massachusetts
817 General Hospital Home Base program.

818 (c) The commission shall: (i) assess and summarize the advances made in research on and
819 treatment and diagnosis of post-traumatic stress disorder; (ii) assess and summarize the advances
820 made in access to care for individuals with a diagnosis of post-traumatic stress disorder; (iii)
821 assess and summarize research services and support activities for post-traumatic stress disorder
822 across the commonwealth, including coordination of the commonwealth's activities and
823 programs with respect to post-traumatic stress disorder; and (iv) develop a comprehensive
824 strategic plan to improve health outcomes for individuals with a diagnosis of post-traumatic
825 stress disorder including, but not limited to, recommendations to: (A) advance research on post-
826 traumatic stress disorder; (B) improve the treatment of post-traumatic stress disorder; (C)
827 improve public awareness and recognition of post-traumatic stress disorder; (D) improve mental
828 health care delivery for individuals with a diagnosis of post-traumatic stress disorder; (E)
829 improve the early and accurate diagnosis of post-traumatic stress disorder; and (F) systematically
830 advance the full spectrum of biomedical research on post-traumatic stress disorder.

831 (d) The commission shall submit its findings and recommendations to the clerks of the
832 house of representatives and senate not later than July 1, 2025.

SECTION 150. (a) The secretary of veterans' services, in coordination with the executive office of health and human services, shall convene a working group to review alternative therapies for mental health treatments for veterans. The working group shall: (i) study whether psychedelic therapy is associated with improved outcomes among veterans with diagnosed mental health disorders; (ii) evaluate literature, research trials and expert opinions to determine if psychedelic therapy is associated with improved outcomes regarding mental health treatment for veterans; and (iii) issue recommendations regarding the provision of psychedelic therapy to treat veterans with mental health disorders in the commonwealth. As used in this section, "psychedelic therapy" shall mean the use of psilocybin, ketamine, or 3,4-methylenedioxymethamphetamine under the direction of a health care provider to treat mental health disorders.

(b) The secretary shall appoint the following members to the working group: 2 members who shall represent medical centers or hospitals in the commonwealth that serve veterans; 2 members who shall represent health insurance companies; 2 members who shall represent veterans' services organizations; 1 member who shall represent an organization currently studying the subject matter of alternative therapies for mental health treatment of veterans; 1 member who shall represent the Center for the Neuroscience of Psychedelics at Massachusetts General Hospital; and such other members with experience in behavioral health or veterans' services as the secretary deems necessary. The secretary shall designate a chair of the working group from the membership of the group.

(c) Not later than January 1, 2025, the working group shall file a report of its findings and any recommendations with the clerks of the house of representatives and the senate, the joint

855 committee on veterans and federal affairs and the joint committee on mental health, substance
856 use and recovery.

857 SECTION 151. The executive office of veterans' services, in consultation with the
858 department of revenue, shall study property tax abatements and exemptions for veterans and
859 surviving spouses pursuant to chapter 59 of the General Laws. The study shall include, but not be
860 limited to: (i) veteran property tax exemptions in other states; (ii) the utilization of a sliding scale
861 based on the percentage of a veteran's disability for the awarding of such exemption to veterans
862 and spouses; (iii) determination of the relation of tax abatements and exemptions to United States
863 Department of Veterans Affairs disability rating; (iv) the financial impact these tax exemptions
864 have on veterans with disabilities; and (v) any anticipated monetary cost that the exemptions may
865 cause. The office shall file a report of its findings and recommendations with the joint committee
866 on veterans and federal affairs, the clerks of the senate and house of representatives and the
867 senate and house committees on ways and means not later than December 31, 2024.

868 SECTION 152. There shall be a special commission to study and develop proposals for
869 ways to improve the quality of life of veterans in the commonwealth, including, but not limited
870 to, employment opportunities for veterans. The commission shall collaborate with veterans'
871 organizations in the commonwealth to develop such proposals. The commission shall consist of:
872 the secretary of veterans' services or a designee, who shall serve as chair; the veteran advocate or
873 a designee; a representative from BRAVE for Veterans, Inc.; 2 persons appointed by the
874 governor with experience in veterans' advocacy; 3 persons appointed by the senate president
875 with experiencing working with veterans; 1 person appointed by the speaker of the house of
876 representatives who is a veteran or the spouse or family member of a veteran; 1 person appointed
877 by the senate minority leader who is a veteran or the spouse or family member of a veteran; and

878 an attorney with experience in veterans issues in the commonwealth, appointed by the minority
879 leader of the house of representatives.

880 Not later than December 31, 2024, the commission shall submit a report of its findings to
881 the joint committee on veterans and federal affairs, the clerks of the senate and house of
882 representatives and the senate and house committees on ways and means.

883 SECTION 153. Sections 25 and 27 shall take effect on taxable years beginning on
884 January 1, 2024.

885 SECTION 154. Sections 29 and 33 to 38, inclusive, shall take effect 6 months after the
886 effective date of this act.

887 SECTION 155. Sections 72 and 115 shall take effect on July 1, 2024.

888 SECTION 156. Section 116 shall take effect on July 1, 2025.