

THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS

In the year One Thousand Nine Hundred and Ninety-eight

AN ACT ESTABLISHING A COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:

SECTION 1. Chapter 3 of the General Laws is hereby amended by adding the following section:—

Section: 66. (1) There is established a permanent commission on the status of women consisting of 19 persons as follows: five persons appointed by the governor; four persons appointed by the speaker of the house of representatives; four persons appointed by the president of the senate; and six persons appointed by the caucus of women legislators or its successor organization. Members of the commission shall be drawn from diverse racial, ethnic, religious, age, sexual orientation and socio-economic backgrounds from throughout the commonwealth and shall have had experience working toward the improvement of the status of women in society. Members shall be subject to the provisions of chapter 268A as they apply to special state employees.

(2) (a) Members shall serve terms of three years and until their successors are appointed.

(b) Vacancies in the membership of the commission shall be filled by the original appointing authority for the balance of the unexpired term.

(c) Appointments shall be made in consultation with women's organizations. Nominations shall be solicited between August 1 and September 16 of each year through an open application process using a uniform application that is widely distributed throughout the state.

(d) The commission shall elect from among its members a chair, a vice chair, a treasurer and any other officers it deems necessary.

(e) The members of the commission shall receive no compensation for their services, but shall be reimbursed for any usual and customary expenses incurred in the performance of their duties.

(3) The commission shall conduct an ongoing study of all matters concerning women and shall be guided by the tenets of the Platform for Action of the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing, China in September, 1995. In furtherance of that responsibility, the commission shall: (a) study, review and report on the status of women in the Commonwealth; (b) inform leaders of business, education, health care, state and local governments and the communications media of issues pertaining to women; (c) serve as a liaison between government and private interest groups concerned with issues affecting women; (d) serve as a clearinghouse for information on issues pertaining to women; (e) identify and recommend qualified women for appointive positions at all levels of government, including boards and commissions, as the commission deems necessary and appropriate; (f) assess programs and practices in all state agencies as they affect women, as the commission deems necessary and appropriate; (g) advise executive and legislative bodies on the effect on women of proposed legislation, as the commission deems necessary and appropriate; and (h) promote and facilitate collaboration among local women's commissions and among women's organizations in the state, as the commission deems necessary and appropriate. The commission shall annually, on or before June 2, report the results of

its findings and activities of the preceding year and its recommendations to the governor and to the clerks of the senate and House of Representatives.

(4) The powers of the commission shall include but not be limited to the following: (a) to use such voluntary and uncompensated services of private individuals, agencies and organizations as may from time to time be offered and needed; (b) to recommend policies and make recommendations to agencies and officers of the state and local subdivisions of government to effectuate the purposes of subsection (3); (c) to select an executive director and to acquire adequate staff to perform its duties, subject to appropriation; (d) to establish and maintain such offices as it may deem necessary, subject to appropriation; (e) to enact bylaws for its own governance; and (f) to hold regular, public meetings and to hold fact-finding hearings and other public forums as it may deem necessary.

(5) The commission shall meet once every month, except for the months of July and August at members' discretion. The (i) governor, (ii) speaker of the House of Representatives, (iii) president of the senate and (iv) designated members of the caucus of women legislators shall be invited to attend the monthly meetings on a rotating basis.

(6) (a) the commission may request from all state agencies such information and assistance as the commission may require.

(b) The commission may accept and solicit funds, including any gifts, donations, grants, or bequests, or any federal funds for any of the purposes of this chapter. Such funds shall be deposited in a separate account with the state treasurer, be received by said treasurer on behalf of the Commonwealth, and be expended by the commission in accordance with law.

SECTION 2. Notwithstanding the provisions of section 66 of chapter 3 of the General Laws, the initial members of the commission on the status of women shall be appointed for the following terms:

(a) The governor shall appoint, on or before November 16, 1998, two members for a term of one year, two members for a term of two years, and one member for a term of three years.

(b) The speaker of the House of Representatives shall appoint, on or before November 16, 1998, two members for a term of one year, one member for a term of two years, and one member for a term of three years.

(c) The president of the senate shall appoint, on or before November 16, 1998, two members for a term of one year, one member for a term of two years, and one member for a term of three years.

(d) The caucus of women legislators or its successor organization shall appoint, on or before November 16, 1998, one member for a term of one year, two members for a term of two years, and three members for a term of three years.

House of Representatives, May 18, 1998
Passed to be enacted, (*signed*) William P. Nagle, Jr., Acting Speaker

In Senate, May 19, 1998

Passed to be enacted, (*signed*) Thomas F. Birmingham, President

May 29, 1998.

Approved, at 12:05 p.m. (*signed*) Argeo Paul Cellucci, Acting Governor