

**HOUSE . . . . . No. 617**

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By Mr. Lepper of Attleboro, petition of John A. Lepper and others for an investigation by a special commission (including members of the General Court) on the status of grandparents raising grandchildren. Elder Affairs.

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**The Commonwealth of Massachusetts**

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PETITION OF:

John A. Lepper	Christine E. Canavan
Martha M. Walz	Elizabeth A. Poirier
Jeffrey Davis Perry	Gloria L. Fox
Jennifer L. Flanagan	John W. Scibak
Michael R. Knapik	Richard J. Ross
Gale D. Candaras	Jennifer M. Callahan
Kathi-Anne Reinstein	
Daniel K. Webster	

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In the Year Two Thousand and Seven.

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AN ACT ESTABLISHING THE GRANDPARENTS RAISING GRANDCHILDREN COMMISSION.

*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. The general court finds: that grandparents constitute  
2 the fastest growing group taking care of children in the common-  
3 wealth as well as in the United States; that many grandparents have  
4 overcome great hardships, brought up their own children, saved for  
5 retirement, and now must bring up their grandchildren; that many  
6 grandparents are making outstanding contributions to the educa-  
7 tional, nurturing, and upbringing of the youth of the Commonwealth;  
8 that grandparents continue to face many challenges in their efforts to  
9 raise their grandchildren, including difficulty in accessing social  
10 services, support groups, and funding; and that the Commonwealth  
11 places a high priority on addressing the unique concerns of the  
12 grandparents raising grandchildren in promoting the wellbeing and  
13 upbringing of the youth of our Commonwealth;

1 SECTION 2. Chapter 3 of the General Laws is hereby amended  
2 by adding the following section:—

3 Section. 67. There shall be a commission on the status of grand-  
4 parents raising grandchildren consisting of:— 5 persons appointed  
5 by the secretary of the executive office of elder affairs or their  
6 designees, 2 of which shall be from the secretary's office; 3 persons  
7 appointed by the governor; 3 persons appointed by the speaker of the  
8 house of representatives; 3 persons appointed by the president of the  
9 senate; and 3 persons appointed by the attorney general. Members of  
10 the commission shall be citizens of the commonwealth who have  
11 demonstrated a commitment to the rearing of grandchildren by  
12 grandparents.

13 Members shall serve terms of 1 year. Vacancies in the member-  
14 ship of the commission shall be filled by the original appointing  
15 authority for the balance of the unexpired term. All appointments  
16 shall be made in consultation with grandparents raising grandchil-  
17 dren organizations in the Commonwealth. Nominations for members  
18 shall be solicited by the appointing authorities between November  
19 15, 2007 and January 31, 2008 through an open application process  
20 using a uniform application that is widely distributed throughout the  
21 state.

22 The commission shall elect from among its members a chair, a  
23 vice chair, a treasurer and any other officers it deems necessary. The  
24 members of the commission shall receive no compensation for their  
25 services, but shall be reimbursed for any usual and customary  
26 expenses incurred in the performance of their duties.

27 The commission will be a resource to the Commonwealth on  
28 issues affecting grandparents raising grandchildren in the Common-  
29 wealth. In furtherance of that responsibility, the Commission  
30 shall:—

31 (a) foster unity among grandparents raising grandchildren com-  
32 munities and organizations in the Commonwealth by promoting  
33 cooperation and sharing of information and encouraging collabora-  
34 tion and joint activities;

35 (b) serve as a liaison between government and private interest  
36 groups with regard to matters of unique interest and concern to  
37 grandparents raising grandchildren in the Commonwealth;

38 (c) assess programs and practices in all state agencies as they  
39 affect grandparents raising grandchildren, as the commission deems  
40 necessary and appropriate;

41 (d) advise executive and legislative bodies of the potential effect  
42 of proposed legislation on grandparents raising grandchildren, as the  
43 commission deems necessary and appropriate;

44 (e) investigate the merits of a state agency dedicated to grandpar-  
45 ents issues and determine how the agency would be set up;

46 (f) determine issues that are faced by relatives other than parents  
47 raising children

48 The commission shall on or before December 31st, report the  
49 results of its findings and activities of the preceding year and its rec-  
50 ommendations to the governor and to the clerks of the senate and  
51 house of representatives.

52 The powers of the commission shall include, but not be limited, to  
53 use such voluntary and uncompensated services of private individ-  
54 uals, agencies and organizations as may from time to time be offered  
55 and needed, including provision of meeting places and refreshments;  
56 to hold regular, public meetings and to hold fact-finding hearings  
57 and other public forums as it may deem necessary; to direct a staff  
58 (“Commission Staff”) to perform its duties; to establish and maintain  
59 such offices as it may deem necessary, subject to appropriation; to  
60 enact bylaws for its own governance but is not inconsistent with any  
61 General or Special Law; and to recommend policies and make rec-  
62 ommendations to agencies and officers of the state and local subdivi-  
63 sions of government to effectuate the purposes of this commission.

64 The commission may request from all state agencies such infor-  
65 mation and assistance as the commission may require.

66 The commission may accept and solicit funds, including any gifts,  
67 donations, grants, or bequests, or any federal funds for any of the  
68 purposes of this chapter. Such funds shall be deposited in a separate  
69 account with the state treasurer, be received by said treasurer on  
70 behalf of the commonwealth, and be expended by the commission in  
71 accordance with law.

1 SECTION 3. Notwithstanding the provisions of section 67 of  
2 chapter 3 of the General Laws, the initial members of the Grandpar-  
3 ents Raising Grandchildren Commission shall be appointed for the  
4 following terms:—

5 (a) A designee from the Executive Office of Elder Affairs shall  
6 appoint, on or before February 28, 2008, five members for a term of  
7 one year, 2 of which are to be staff of the Executive Office of Elder  
8 Affairs.

9 (b ) The governor shall appoint, on or before February 28, 2008,  
10 three members for a term of year.

11 (c) The speaker of the house of representatives shall appoint, on  
12 or before February 28, 2008, three members for a term of one year.

13 (d) The president of the senate shall appoint, on or before Feb-  
14 ruary 28, 2008, three members for a term of one year.

15 (e) The attorney general shall appoint, on or before February 28,  
16 2008, three members for a term of one year.