

SENATE No.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PRESENTED BY:

Paul R. Feeney

To the Honorable Senate and House of Representatives of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in General Court assembled:

The undersigned legislators and/or citizens respectfully petition for the adoption of the accompanying bill:

An Act to establish a commission to report on the Moral Budget.

PETITION OF:

NAME:

Paul R. Feeney

DISTRICT/ADDRESS:

Bristol and Norfolk

SENATE No.

[Pin Slip]

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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

An Act to establish a commission to report on the Moral Budget.

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

1 Moral Budget Resolution

2 SECTION 1

3 Whereas we live in the richest country in the history of the world and have abundant
4 resources to ensure dignity and health of people and the country, the coronavirus pandemic and
5 its consequences have revealed the need to dramatically change our priorities and reallocate
6 funding to preserve the future of the people of this Commonwealth and the country as a whole;

7 According to 2010 US Census categories some 10% - close to 700,000 people - are living
8 below the poverty level in Massachusetts. Many more are struggling with high housing costs,
9 student debt, and inability to afford adequate healthcare. The number of persons experiencing
10 homelessness last year was at least 20,000.

11 Before the pandemic about 30% of the Massachusetts budget derived from Federal
12 Government funds. With the CARES Act and additional federal stimuli, even more of the state
13 budget is coupled to the federal budget.

14 Therefore, be it resolved that the Members of the Massachusetts Legislature call upon the
15 MA members of the U.S. Congressional Delegation and the President to support the Moral
16 Budget for America (developed by the Poor People's Campaign and the Institute for Policy
17 Studies) to revive, repair and renew our national and state economies.

18 Education: The Moral Budget invests \$24.4 billion per year in K-12 schools and
19 teachers to boost academic performance among poor and struggling children. This would bring
20 \$480 million to Massachusetts for public education, sufficient to hire more than 6,000 well
21 trained teachers. This would significantly contribute to the \$2 billion needed to fully fund the
22 State Fund Our Future Education initiative.

23 The Moral Budget also invests about \$70 billion per year for the federal and state shares
24 of providing four years of free public college. This would bring about \$1.4 billion into
25 Massachusetts, and lift up the prospects of completing their education for the 260,000 students in
26 the public colleges and universities.

27 Housing: The Moral budget provides \$44 billion per year in investments in a housing
28 trust fund to build, maintain, and preserve affordable rental homes. The sums coming to
29 Massachusetts could be used to end Homelessness in the Commonwealth.

30 Healthcare: Whereas the largest expenditure in the Massachusetts budget is for
31 healthcare, and 379,000 people are still uninsured, the Moral Budget contributes funding for
32 States to transition to lower cost single payer health care;

33 Family Services: As an immediate measure, The Moral Budget restores \$8.9 billion for
34 Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) to previous funding levels, to provide a
35 modicum of relief to poor families who deserve a fully functional safety net. TANF has not been
36 adjusted for inflation since the Clinton administration. The restored budget would bring
37 \$180,000,000 to poor families in Mass.

38 Veterans Services: Whereas some 20% of veterans in Massachusetts are living on less
39 than \$35,000 a year and one in five are living in poverty, the Moral Budget eliminates veteran's
40 homelessness, expands access to mental health care and expands job training for veterans ;

41 Transportation: The Moral Budget increases in federal transportation spending would
42 bring about \$1.2 billion/year for Massachusetts. This would enable re-establishing train service
43 for "South Coast Rail" to New Bedford and Fall River; begin design for the North Station -
44 South Station Connector, which would unify the nearly entire east coast rail while also fixing
45 many confusing commutes; extending the Blue Line to Lynn; and expanding Regional Bus
46 Service for Central and Western MA.

47 Right to Vote and Mass Incarceration: Whereas almost 3,000 black adults in
48 Massachusetts cannot vote due to felony voting restrictions, the Moral Budget increases funding
49 for voter protection and legal assistance programs and funds public financing of campaigns.

50 Clean Water: By Investing \$37.2 billion a year in water infrastructure, the Moral Budget
51 would create up to 945,000 jobs while providing safe drinking water to thousands of
52 communities that don't have it. Some 18,000 of these jobs would be provided to Massachusetts
53 residents, enabling upgrades in water systems of cities and towns throughout the
54 Commonwealth.

55 Climate Protection: Given that in Massachusetts 10,450 tons of NOx are emitted yearly, a
56 leading cause of respiratory problems, the Moral Budget invests \$200 billion in transitioning to
57 clean renewable energy, crumbling roads, bridges, and a Green New Deal to build a fully
58 modernized electric grid and create about 50,000 high-quality jobs in Massachusetts.

59 Fair Wages: A \$15 federal minimum wage enacted immediately would raise pay for 49
60 million workers nationally by a combined \$328 billion per year. This would benefit about a
61 million Massachusetts workers, raising their purchasing power by \$600 million.

62 Peace and Security: Hundreds of Massachusetts residents have been wounded or lost their
63 lives fighting in Iraq, Afghanistan and beyond since 2001. Pursuing these military adventures
64 have diverted funds from sectors that will make us more resilient and safer such as healthcare,
65 education, the transition to renewable energy, and increased protection of vital natural resources
66 in

67 The Moral Budget saves as much as \$350 billion per year in the federal budget by
68 cutting current Pentagon spending for fighting endless wars, maintaining a worldwide network of
69 800 military bases, stoking dangerous arms races, and subsidizing for-profit corporate
70 contractors, leaving a military budget that would still be larger than that of China, Russia, and
71 Iran combined. These savings would finance many of the investments listed above.

72 SECTION 2

73 (a) There shall be a Moral Budget commission established pursuant to section 2A of
74 chapter 4 of the General Laws, referred to in this section as the Commission. The Commission
75 shall evaluate and report on the impact that passage of the People's Budget would have on

76 Massachusetts, including currently underfunded sectors such as environment, education,
77 healthcare, transportation, and the arts.

78 (b) The Commission shall consist of 15 members: 2 of whom shall be members of the
79 House of Representatives appointed by the Speaker of the House of representatives; 1 of whom
80 shall be a member of the House of Representatives appointed by the minority leader of the House
81 of Representatives; 2 of whom shall be members of the Senate appointed by the President of the
82 senate; 1 of whom shall be a member of the Senate appointed by the Minority Leader of the
83 Senate; 2 of whom shall be appointed by the governor of which one shall be a member of the
84 Executive Office of Administration and Finance; 1 of whom shall be a member of Massachusetts
85 Peace Action; 1 of whom shall be a member of the Mass Taxpayers Association; 1 of whom
86 shall be a member of Mass Budget and Policy Center; 1 of whom shall be a board member of the
87 Associated Industries of Massachusetts; 1 of whom shall be a member of the SEIU Executive
88 Council; 1 of whom shall be a board member of the Alliance of Business Leadership; 1
89 appointed by the Treasurer of the Commonwealth

90 (c) The Commission shall submit its final report to the governor, the House and Senate
91 chairs of the Joint Committee on Revenue not later than six months after enactment which shall
92 include: (i) an evaluation of the potential impacts of the resolution upon the standard of living of
93 Massachusetts residents.