

# HOUSE . . . . No. 1685

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By Mr. Cook of Boston (by request), petition of John S. R. Bourne for legislation regulating rentals for lodgings and apartments and for preventing discrimination in granting leases thereof because of race, color or creed. Mercantile Affairs.

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## The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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In the Year One Thousand Nine Hundred and Forty-One.

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AN ACT TO AID IN REGULATING RENTALS FOR LODGINGS, FOR APARTMENTS FOR LIVING PURPOSES, AND FOR DWELLING HOUSES INTENDED FOR LIVING QUARTERS; AND FOR PREVENTING DISCRIMINATION IN GRANTING LEASES FOR SAID APARTMENTS, ROOMS OR DWELLING HOUSES FOR REASONS OF RACE, COLOR, CREED, OR RELIGIOUS SECT.

*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. There shall be set up under the juris-  
2 diction of the bureau of the necessities of life a com-  
3 mission of three persons, one of whom shall be a  
4 Negro citizen of the commonwealth and of repute  
5 among the people of the commonwealth, all of whom  
6 shall be appointed to this commission by the governor  
7 of the commonwealth, to serve at a remuneration of  
8 ten dollars per diem for the time spent on the activities  
9 of the commission.

1 SECTION 2. Upon complaint of residents in a  
2 lodging house, apartment house or dwelling house,  
3 of unduly high rentals charged; or of unduly high  
4 rentals asked when application is made for lease of  
5 living quarters in apartment or dwelling house; or  
6 of unduly high rentals asked for renewal of lease or  
7 for the right to continue occupancy of said quarters  
8 in apartment or dwelling house, made orally or in  
9 writing to the commission, or made to a member of  
10 this commission, the commission shall investigate  
11 this complaint as to its fairness, and if evidence is  
12 presented that there was intent to take excess returns  
13 from said rentals, or more rental than ought to be  
14 taken for property of the type and surroundings at  
15 normal values, the commission shall ask of the person  
16 or persons or organization in control of said rentals  
17 or the management of said building for the proper  
18 adjustment of the rental in question; or, in case the  
19 adjustment is not made the commission shall prefer  
20 charges of profiteering against the persons responsible  
21 to be brought in the courts of the commonwealth of  
22 Massachusetts.

1 SECTION 3. Upon the complaint, written or oral,  
2 to the commission or any member thereof, that room  
3 in a lodging house, or that a lease of quarters or of an  
4 apartment or dwelling house has been refused, or that  
5 persons have been requested to vacate such quarters,  
6 or that a lease has been terminated, for reasons of dis-  
7 crimination due to race, color, sect, or religious  
8 denomination, the commission shall investigate the  
9 complaint; and upon evidence that discrimination  
10 or segregation was intended by the refusal to grant  
11 lease or tenancy for living quarters, or that a request

12 to lease or let premises has been denied, or a tenancy  
13 at will has been terminated, or a higher rent charged  
14 than that charged for quarters or houses in the same  
15 or near neighborhood, for reasons of race, color, sect  
16 or religious denomination, the commission shall  
17 request an immediate end be put to the discrimination  
18 or restriction. In case of refusal to end such practices,  
19 or if there is undue delay in correcting such practice,  
20 the commission shall prefer charges in the courts  
21 of the commonwealth against the persons responsible  
22 therefor.

1 SECTION 4. The penalty for violating any of the  
2 provisions herein set forth shall be a fine of not less  
3 than one hundred and fifty dollars and not more than  
4 five thousand dollars, or six months to a year of  
5 imprisonment, or both.

6 The aggrieved person or persons may recover in  
7 civil suit damages commensurate with the loss or  
8 damage suffered by any of the above acts of dis-  
9 crimination or of undue high rentals, provided that  
10 suit be instituted not against more than one person  
11 or one corporation or group for any one such offence.

