
By Mr. Atkins, a petition (accompanied by bill, Senate, No. 473) of Chester G. Atkins for legislation to facilitate access of mental health patients to the Mental Health Legal Advisors Committee, and for other purposes. Human Services and Elderly Affairs.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

In the Year One Thousand Nine Hundred and Seventy-Six.

AN ACT FACILITATING ACCESS OF MENTAL HEALTH PATIENTS TO THE MENTAL HEALTH LEGAL ADVISORS COMMITTEE, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

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 34E of Chapter 221 of the General Laws,
2 as most recently amended by Chapter 893 of the Acts of 1973,
3 is hereby further amended by striking the third paragraph,
4 and inserting in place thereof the following new paragraph:—
5 “It shall be the duty of the Committee to develop a program
6 of legal assistance. Such a program shall utilize the participa-
7 tion of attorneys, professional and nonprofessional aides, all
8 members of the Mental Health Advisory Committee and its
9 staff, and civil rights officers of the Office of Legal Medicine of
10 the Department of Mental Health, to assist and advise indigent
11 patients and residents in Bridgewater state hospital and all
12 other mental health and retardation facilities, both public and
13 private, in the Commonwealth, concerning their legal rights.
14 Said persons may, subject to the approval of the Committee,
15 interview and examine all pertinent records of any such pa-
16 tient or resident. In addition, the Committee shall appoint such
17 clerical or other non-professional staff assistant as may be
18 necessary to carry out the duties of the Committee.

1 SECTION 2. Section 34E of Chapter 221 of the General Laws,
2 as most recently amended by Chapter 893 of the Acts of 1973,
3 is hereby further amended by adding the following para-

4 graph:—

5 “The Commonwealth shall appropriate such sums as may be
6 necessary to carry out the purposes of this act.”

1 SECTION 3. Subdivision C of Section 7 of Chapter 123 of the
2 General Laws is hereby amended by adding the following new
3 sentence:—

4 “Notice of all proceedings, and of the determinations there-
5 on, shall be provided to the Mental Health Legal Advisors
6 Committee.”