

SENATE No. 2702

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PRESENTED BY:

Diana DiZoglio

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 providing COVID-19 emergency financial relief for veterans.

PETITION OF:

NAME:	DISTRICT/ADDRESS:	
<i>Diana DiZoglio</i>	<i>First Essex</i>	
<i>Ryan C. Fattman</i>	<i>Worcester and Norfolk</i>	<i>5/1/2020</i>
<i>Patrick M. O'Connor</i>	<i>Plymouth and Norfolk</i>	<i>5/7/2020</i>
<i>Marcos A. Devers</i>	<i>16th Essex</i>	<i>5/7/2020</i>
<i>Christopher Hendricks</i>	<i>11th Bristol</i>	<i>5/8/2020</i>
<i>Mike Connolly</i>	<i>26th Middlesex</i>	<i>5/8/2020</i>
<i>Michael O. Moore</i>	<i>Second Worcester</i>	<i>5/8/2020</i>
<i>John H. Rogers</i>	<i>12th Norfolk</i>	<i>5/14/2020</i>

SENATE No. 2702

By Ms. DiZoglio, a petition (accompanied by bill, Senate, No. 2702) (subject to Joint Rule 12) of Diana DiZoglio, Ryan C. Fattman, Patrick M. O'Connor, Marcos A. Devers and other members of the General Court for legislation to provide COVID-19 emergency financial relief for veterans. Veterans and Federal Affairs.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

**In the One Hundred and Ninety-First General Court
(2019-2020)**

An Act providing COVID-19 emergency financial relief for veterans.

Whereas, The deferred operation of this act would tend to defeat its purpose, which is to provide emergency financial relief for veterans who have suffered a financial loss due to COVID-19, therefore it is hereby declared to be an emergency law, necessary for the immediate preservation of the public safety, health and convenience.

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: DEFINITIONS

2 Section 1. The following words as used in this Act, unless the context otherwise requires,
3 shall have the following meanings:

4 “COVID-19”, the 2019 Novel Coronavirus or 2019-nCoV.

5 “Eligible applicant”, an individual who: (a) qualifies as a veteran under clause 43 of
6 section 7 of chapter 4 of the General Laws, or is the surviving spouse (who has not remarried) of
7 a deceased veteran; (b) is a resident of the Commonwealth, and (c) has suffered a financial loss
8 due to COVID-19.

9 “Financial loss”, a reduction or severance of a household’s earned or unearned income.

10 “Secretary”, the Secretary of the Department of Veterans’ Services.

11 SECTION 2: RELIEF GRANTS

12 Section 2. (a) Notwithstanding any general or special law to the contrary and in addition
13 to any other public funds, the Secretary is empowered to the extent and in such amounts as
14 provided through appropriation to provide one-time emergency financial relief grants to eligible
15 applicants in need of assistance as a result of COVID-19.

16 (b) Eligible applicants must be able to demonstrate a financial loss on or after the date of
17 the emergency declaration issued by the Governor dated March 10, 2020, and designated as
18 Executive Order Number 591, related to one of the following situations: (1) the eligible applicant
19 or a legal dependent of the eligible applicant has/had a confirmed case of COVID-19; (2) a
20 healthcare provider has determined that the presence of the eligible applicant or the eligible
21 applicant’s spouse in the workplace would jeopardize the health of the eligible applicant or the
22 eligible applicant’s spouse or others due to likely exposure to COVID-19; (3) a healthcare
23 provider has determined that the health of the eligible applicant or the eligible applicant’s spouse
24 is jeopardized due to a diagnosed underlying health condition which would put the eligible
25 applicant or the eligible applicant’s spouse at increased risk if exposed to COVID-19 in the
26 workplace; (4) the employer of the eligible applicant or the eligible applicant’s spouse directs
27 them not to report to work for COVID-19 related reasons; (5) the workplace of the eligible
28 applicant or the eligible applicant’s spouse is closed for COVID-19-related reasons and they are
29 excused from work duties because they cannot be reassigned or work remotely; or (6) the

30 eligible applicant is financially impacted by a school or childcare provider closure due to
31 COVID-19.

32 (c) Eligible applicants may use the financial assistance authorized under this section to
33 purchase groceries, health care supplies or other necessities, delivery services for the foregoing,
34 for emergency financial relief, hospitalization assistance, medical care or treatment, or any other
35 COVID-19-related assistance as determined by the Secretary.

36 (d) Eligibility for the financial assistance or the level of financial assistance provided
37 under this section shall not be limited because the eligible applicant has previously received
38 unemployment benefits or assistance from other public funds.

39 SECTION 3. APPROPRIATION

40 Section 3. (a) There shall be established a separate fund to be known as the COVID-19
41 Relief for Veterans Fund, to be administered by the Secretary for the purposes of carrying out
42 this Act. The Secretary may accept gifts, donations, grants or bequests or any federal funds for
43 any of the purposes set forth in this section, which shall be credited to the fund.

44 (b) On the effective date of this Act, the Comptroller shall transfer \$10,000,000 from the
45 General Fund to the fund established in subsection (a) for the purposes of carrying out this Act.

46 (c) The amount appropriated under this section shall be available until June 30, 2021.

47 SECTION 4: REGULATIONS

48 Section 4. The Secretary is hereby authorized to promulgate guidance and regulations to
49 assure the timely and effective implementation of this Act.

50 SECTION 5: EFFECTIVE DATE

51 Section 5. This Act shall take effect upon its passage.