

Open Up Records at Mass Archives | HD.3929

This legislation will bring Massachusetts in line with dozens of other states by opening records held at the Massachusetts Archives for public inspection after 75 years, bringing Massachusetts in line with federal standards. Citizens currently have no way to access documents about their own ancestors no matter how old a document is.

Saying no to records requests is not cheap

It is estimated that state agencies spend approximately **\$100,000 per year and 2080 staff hours annually** pre-reading records, redacting them, and denying requests. That's without the cost of defending lawsuits filed each year to contest our records laws. Passing this legislation will free up this time and money for projects that enhance access rather than impeding it.

Saying no to records requests is a human rights issue

Thousands of people were buried in anonymous graves by the state after dying in state institutions. **Descendants cannot access records to locate those graves.** Passing this legislation will open records while respecting the privacy of the living.

Saying no to records requests is discriminatory

Since the majority of protected records are related to disability institutions, our current laws disproportionately block access to the history of how people with disabilities in Massachusetts have lived and been treated, going back to the colonial era. **No other marginalized group faces such hurdles to records access in Massachusetts.** Passing this legislation will stop this discrimination by allowing disabled people to see ourselves in history.

Who is saying yes?

Sponsors Representatives Sean Garballey and Mindy Domb; **Cosponsors** Mike Finn, Kay Khan, and Ruth Balsler.

Supporters

The Massachusetts Association for Mental Health, Mass Families, & dozens of disability groups, the Center for Public Representation, the Disability Law Center & other legal rights groups, the Massachusetts Historical Society, the New England Genealogical Historic Society, & Secretary of State William Galvin

Bill Language: "All records in the custody of the state secretary shall be open to public inspection and available for copying after the expiration of 75 years from the creation of the record."