

HD.2864 – Data Equity Bill: An Act ensuring equitable representation in the Commonwealth

Rep. Tackey Chan, Sen. Jamie Eldridge

Summary:

This legislation requires standardized collection and reporting of race and ethnicity data by state agencies (only those that already collect demographic data), to improve government and community services while protecting the privacy of Massachusetts residents.

What this bill does:

- Clarifies the definition of government agency
- Requires all government agencies that already collect demographic data on race/ethnicity to disaggregate the categories for Asian, Pacific Islander, Black or African American, Latino, and White or Caucasian, in keeping with the standards of the U.S. Census
- Clarifies that individuals are not required to fill out this information and the question may not be completed on an individual's behalf by a government agency
- Mandates that no individual can be denied services for not participating
- Requires that race/ethnicity data collected by the state be made available, except for any personal identifying information which is deemed confidential and protected by state and federal privacy laws
- Requires the Executive Office of Administration and Finance to establish regulations and guidelines for the collection of demographic data
- Requires annual reporting to the Massachusetts House and Senate Clerks and the Joint Committee on State Administration and Regulatory Oversight as to the progress and status of data collection

Why this bill matters:

Massachusetts residents come from a diverse range of backgrounds, each with unique family and immigration histories, cultures, and needs. Better data allows policymakers to rely less on personal stories and more on numbers and hard facts when proposing new policies, programs, and services to help their communities. For example, knowing which languages are most spoken at a community hospital enables that hospital to hire the right translators so patients receive accurate information and understand what's happening around them. Human service agencies can advocate for funding for programs based on their community's specific needs, such as mental health counseling for residents who came to Massachusetts as refugees.