



MASSACHUSETTS
MEDICAL SOCIETY

Every physician matters, each patient counts.

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF H.2157
AN ACT UPDATING THE MEDICAL SOCIETY MISSION STATEMENT
BEFORE THE JOINT COMMITTEE ON LABOR AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
October 8, 2025**

The Massachusetts Medical Society (MMS) wishes to be recorded in strong support of H.2157, *An Act updating the medical society mission statement*.

The MMS is a professional association of over 23,000 physicians, residents, and medical students across all clinical disciplines, organizations, and practice settings. The Medical Society is committed to advocating on behalf of patients, to provide them a better health care system, and on behalf of physicians, to help them provide the best care possible. MMS policy asserts that enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health, in all its dimensions, including health care, is a basic human right. We also believe that the provision of health care services as well as optimizing the social determinants of health is an ethical obligation of a civil society. Accordingly, we support H.2157, *An Act updating the medical society mission statement*.

Founded in 1781 through an act of the Massachusetts legislature, the MMS has always been dedicated to advancing medical knowledge, upholding the highest standards of medical practice, and safeguarding the health of the Commonwealth. Over the centuries, our mission statement has evolved to reflect the profession's ethical obligations and society's changing understanding of health care. In 1969, legislative action amended our Articles of Incorporation to include the following purpose: "*The Massachusetts Medical Society shall be to do all things as may be necessary and appropriate to advance medical knowledge, to develop and maintain the highest professional and ethical standards of medical practice and health care, and to promote medical institutions formed on liberal principles for the health, benefit, and welfare of the **citizens** of the Commonwealth.*"

Today, we respectfully request the legislature amend this language to replace the word "*citizens*" with "**people**." This change was unanimously endorsed by our governing bodies and reflects a directive by passed our House of Delegates at our 2024 Annual Meeting. This is more than a semantic shift; it is a

necessary modernization that aligns our statutory mission with the realities of medical practice and with the Society's longstanding policies on health equity. Physicians care for all who reside in the Commonwealth, regardless of citizenship status. Referring only to "citizens" is inaccurate and inadvertently exclusionary. The word "*people*" better reflects both the populations we serve and our ethical duty as physicians.

From a health policy perspective, inclusive language matters. Restricting our mission to "citizens" risks reinforcing frameworks that seek to limit access to care, undermine public health, and stigmatize vulnerable groups such as immigrants, asylum seekers, and refugees. In contrast, using "*people*" aligns with the MMS's guiding principle that health care is a basic human right. It also reflects our explicit organizational policies supporting equitable care regardless of immigration status and opposing practices that deter immigrants from seeking necessary medical services.

Public health outcomes are interconnected; ensuring access to health care for all individuals strengthens the well-being of the entire community. Whether in responding to disease outbreaks, addressing maternal health disparities, or managing chronic illness, as physicians, we understand that the health of one group cannot be siloed from the health of others. Our mission statement should reflect this shared responsibility. For more than 240 years, the MMS has worked in partnership with the legislature to safeguard the health of patients in Massachusetts. Updating our mission statement to refer to "the people of the Commonwealth" reaffirms that commitment in language that is accurate, inclusive, and consistent with our organizational values.

For these reasons, we respectfully urge you to report H.2157 favorably. Thank you for your consideration of our comments.