

ACTS RELATIVE TO UNSOLVED HOMICIDES (S.2174/H.4114)

Senate Sponsor: Sen. Liz Miranda (Second Suffolk)
Committee: Senate Ways & Means (*favorably reported from Joint Committee on State Administration and Regulatory Oversight*)

House Sponsors: Rep. Russell Holmes (6th Suffolk),
Rep. Bud Williams (11th Hampden)
Committee: Joint Committee on the Judiciary

This bill was filed in conjunction with the organizing and mobilizing of survivors of homicide victims statewide who have been shedding light on the impact unsolved homicide cases have on families. Calling themselves the “Unsolved Homicides Ambassadors”, these survivors meet regularly to “shine light on [their] Loved One’s cases, build connection, and create collaborative action...towards outcomes of justice”.

“The dead cannot cry out for justice. It is the duty of the living to do so.” -Lois McMaster Bujold

THE ISSUE

- From 2000-2023, apx. **51%** of homicide cases in Massachusetts remain unsolved, numbering **1,911** unsolved homicide cases.
- For each homicide, there are at least **10** immediate family members directly impacted, leaving over **19,000 survivors** of homicide victims without answers. This number grows exponentially each year.
- Homicides of Black victims are **twice as likely** to go unsolved as homicides of White victims.
- Addressing the issue of unsolved homicides requires **institutional accountability** and quality assurance. Wrongful convictions leave survivors of homicide victims and exonerees with more questions and lasting pain.
- From 2010-2023, **7.2%** of all MA prisoners convicted of first-degree murder and sentenced to life without parole were ordered released due to wrongful convictions. 29 have been identified and have cumulatively served over 900 years before release.

THE BILL

- Establishes an **Office of Unsolved Homicides and Unsolved Homicides Task Force** within the Office of the Attorney General.
- Allows survivors of homicide victims to petition their case be re-reviewed if unsolved for **three or more years**.
- The office will be required to report back to the survivor(s) within **90 days** including:
 - Analysis of the investigation
 - Assessment of witnesses
 - Examination of physical evidence
 - Update case using most current investigation standards
- Establishes a **toll-free tip line** and website for anonymous tips
- Establishes a **statewide database** of unsolved homicides
- Establishes the “Unsolved Homicides Task Force Fund”, including an initial \$10million investment.

UNSOLVED HOMICIDES TASK FORCE & THE OFFICE OF UNSOLVED HOMICIDES

- Established for the purpose of investigating and prosecuting unsolved homicides in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.
- **Task force consisting of:**
 - Attorney General (*co-chair*)
 - President of the Massachusetts District Attorney Association (*co-chair*)
 - Secretary of Public Safety and Security
 - Colonel of State Police
 - Commissioners or Chief of Police for Boston, Worcester, and Springfield
 - The Chief Counsel of the Committee for Public Counsel Services
 - District Attorney for each county
 - Three representatives from the survivors of homicide victims community.
- **Task force shall establish teams of investigators such as:**
 - State police detectives
 - Municipal police detectives
 - Forensic scientists
 - Crime analysts
 - Victim advocates
 - Defense attorneys
 - Etc.
- **Meet quarterly, and submitting an annual report of the:**
 - Number of unsolved homicides in the commonwealth
 - Number of unsolved homicide cases reviewed and pursued by the teams
 - Number of arrests, indictments, convictions, and acquittals resulting from the work of the teams
 - Challenges and barriers faced by the teams in investigating and prosecuting unsolved homicides
 - Recommendations for improving the effectiveness and efficiency of the task force and its teams
 - Any other information deemed relevant by the task force.

Project Cold Case. (2024). *Uniform Crime Report for Homicides: 1965-2023*. Retrieved [here](#).
The Council of State Governments, Justice Center, (2024). *The Accountability Gap: Unsolved Violent Crime in the United States*. Retrieved [here](#).
Murder Accountability Project, (2022). *Homicide by Race Murder Accountability Project Most Recent Data: 2022*. Retrieved [here](#).
Dirk Greineder, (2023). *Wrongful First-Degree Murder Convictions in Massachusetts: Too Many and Justice Too Long Delayed*. National Lawyers Guild, Massachusetts Chapter. Retrieved [here](#).