



PRESS RELEASE
June 6, 2022

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Massachusetts State Advisory Committee Calls on Legislature to Protest Commonwealth Residents from Predatory Asset Forfeiture Practices

The Massachusetts State Advisory Committee to the United States Commission on Civil Rights (SAC) released an interim Advisory Memorandum on Civil Asset Forfeiture in the Commonwealth. The Massachusetts SAC urges the state to pass legislation that provides more protection to its residents.

In its memo, the Committee draws the Commission's attention to two pieces of legislation before the Legislature – Senate Bill S.2105 “An Act relative to civil asset forfeiture data reporting.” The second bill is Massachusetts Senate Bill S.2671 “An Act relative to forfeiture reform.”

The Committee supports both pieces of legislation as a first step in remedying the injustices of civil asset forfeiture. The Massachusetts Legislature has recognized the problem and created a commission to study civil asset forfeiture practices. The Advisory Committee's findings mirror those of the Special Commission to Study Civil Asset Forfeiture Policies and Practices, which made six recommendations to the legislature. Both call for more due process protections, improved reporting requirements, a minimum threshold value of property subject to seizure, and other protections for Commonwealth residents.

David Harris, chair of the Massachusetts SAC, states: “Our Advisory Committee thinks that by creating transparency, oversight and accountability, the proposed legislation is a constructive first step toward reforming civil asset forfeiture in the Commonwealth. To be sure, much remains to be done and the Advisory Committee hopes the legislature can follow these first steps with further reform in the future.”

For more information, contact: David Harris, Chair, Massachusetts Advisory Committee (dharris@law.harvard.edu);

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The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights is an independent, bipartisan agency charged with advising the President and Congress on civil rights matters and issuing an annual federal civil rights enforcement report. The Commission, by Congressional mandate, establishes Advisory Committees in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. Committee members conduct reviews and produce reports and recommendations concerning local civil rights issues, including justice, voting, discrimination, housing, education, and other important themes. For information, please visit <http://www.usccr.gov> and follow us on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#).