



Legislation Summary:

An Act promoting restorative justice practices

Initial bill number: [S847/H793](#) (Bill numbers will change as legislation proceeds.)

Sponsors: Sen. James Eldridge, Rep. Sean Garballey

This bill promotes setting up community based restorative justice programs across the Commonwealth and incentivizes their use. Restorative justice is voluntary for all parties involved. It is a process bringing together victims, perpetrators, police, community members, and facilitators and encourages deep discussion and work to get at the root of an incident and change behavior. These programs provide a plan to rectify harm and give support for the hard work of change and becoming good members of the community. It establishes an Office of Restorative Justice under the Judiciary to monitor and provide technical assistance.

Why this is good: When law enforcement, the courts, and other points of entry to the criminal justice system can divert certain cases out of the system, it allows for giving second chances. There are already [dozens of restorative justice programs](#) in schools and communities in Massachusetts. There are more than 300 programs in 29 states.

Bottom Line: Restorative justice has higher satisfaction rates for victims, reduces recidivism, allows for more options for police and court personnel in response to crime, and provides meaningful roles for affected community members. Police departments and schools report higher satisfaction with the results and encourage the spread of more programs to allow diversion for non-violent, youthful, and first-time offenses. This bill speeds up the spread of these programs and provides best-practice tools and oversight.