

SENATE No. 398

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PRESENTED BY:

Jason M. Lewis

To the Honorable Senate and House of Representatives of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in General Court assembled:

The undersigned legislators and/or citizens respectfully petition for the adoption of the accompanying bill:

An Act to promote student college and career success and civic engagement.

PETITION OF:

NAME:	DISTRICT/ADDRESS:	
<i>Jason M. Lewis</i>	<i>Fifth Middlesex</i>	
<i>Joanne M. Comerford</i>	<i>Hampshire, Franklin and Worcester</i>	<i>1/23/2025</i>
<i>Rebecca L. Rausch</i>	<i>Norfolk, Worcester and Middlesex</i>	<i>1/24/2025</i>
<i>James B. Eldridge</i>	<i>Middlesex and Worcester</i>	<i>2/11/2025</i>

SENATE No. 398

By Mr. Lewis, a petition (accompanied by bill, Senate, No. 398) of Jason M. Lewis, Joanne M. Comerford, Rebecca L. Rausch and James B. Eldridge for legislation relative to programs of study for high school students and graduation requirements. Education.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

In the One Hundred and Ninety-Fourth General Court
(2025-2026)

An Act to promote student college and career success and civic engagement.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Section 1D of chapter 69 of the General Laws, as appearing in the 2022
2 Official Edition, is hereby amended by striking out subsection (i) and inserting in place thereof
3 the following section:-

4 (i) The “competency determination” shall be based on the academic standards and
5 curriculum frameworks for high school education in the areas of English, mathematics, science
6 and technology, history and social science, foreign languages, and arts, and shall represent a
7 determination that a particular student has demonstrated mastery of a common core of skills,
8 competencies and knowledge in these areas, as measured by the requirements set out in section
9 38. Satisfaction of the requirements of the competency determination shall be a condition for
10 high school graduation.

11 SECTION 2. Chapter 69 of the General Laws is hereby amended by inserting after
12 section 37 the following section:-

Section 38. High School Education Program of Study

(a) The department, with approval from the board and with advice and guidance from the advisory council established pursuant to subsection (d), shall adopt a program of study intended to align high school coursework with college and career expectations and promote civic engagement.

(b) The department shall determine, with advice and guidance from the advisory council established pursuant to subsection (d), the requirements and implementation of the program of study in all schools and districts in the Commonwealth. In making requirements and implementation determinations, the department shall include, but not be limited to, the following considerations: (i) establishing a timeline for districts to be in compliance with the program of study and for the program to be implemented as a condition of the competency determination, including gathering data and feedback from schools and districts to determine what resources are needed to become compliant; (ii) ensuring that the content of the program of study and the resulting student skills, knowledge and competencies are comparable in their application and rigor in all schools and districts in the Commonwealth, which may include the use of syllabus review, performance-based assessments or other approaches; (iii) creating a process for schools and districts to request a time limited waiver for compliance with this section based on hardship; (iv) determining any modifications or exceptions for particular sub-groups of students for required coursework in the program of study, including, but not limited to, students with severe cognitive disabilities, newly arrived immigrant students, newly arrived students from other states, English Language Learners, and vocational and technical education students; (v) determining if there should be an appeals process or educational assistance plan for students who have difficulty completing the program of study and a requirement to provide the student's

parent or guardian the opportunity to review this plan; (vi) reporting requirements that districts must complete to illustrate compliance with this section, provided that such reporting requirements are consistent with and not duplicative of existing reporting requirements; and (vii) any other requirements that the department deems necessary to ensure that the program of study is equitably and successfully implemented in all schools and districts.

(c) The department, with advice and guidance from the advisory council established pursuant to subsection (d), may consider, as a further condition of the competency determination, that students must also complete one or more additional learning experiences or enrichment opportunities, in addition to the program of study. These additional learning experiences or enrichment opportunities may include, but not be limited to, a service-learning project, a capstone project, completing one or more advanced placement courses, meeting certain scores on an SAT or ACT or other exam, taking one or more dual credit or early college courses, participating in one or more internships or other work-based learning, participating in one or more extracurricular activities, completing an innovation pathway, obtaining an industry recognized credential, participating in My Career and Academic Plan or meeting standards on the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery. If the department requires one or more additional learning experiences or enrichment opportunities, (i) the department must offer a range of options for students to choose from to meet this requirement; and (ii) schools and districts must offer their students multiple options, but are not required to offer all department approved options.

(d) The department shall establish a competency determination advisory council to advise and assist the department on all aspects of the requirements and implementation of the competency determination as defined in section 1D. The advisory council shall include 1

member from each of the following organizations, or a designee: the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents; the Massachusetts Association of Regional Schools; the Massachusetts Teachers Association; the American Federation of Teachers Massachusetts; the Massachusetts Association of Vocational Administrators Inc.; the Massachusetts Public Charter School Association; the Massachusetts Business Alliance for Education; the Massachusetts Association for School Committees; the Massachusetts Taxpayers Foundation; and Massachusetts School Administrators' Association; and 5 additional members to be appointed by the commissioner representing a range of stakeholders with diversity in geography, backgrounds and experience.

(e) The department shall hold not less than 5 public hearings in geographically diverse regions across the commonwealth to solicit public input on requirements and implementation of the program of study.

(f) The department shall, subject to appropriation, provide technical assistance and establish a grant program for schools and districts to support implementation of the program of study required by this section.

(g) The department shall review and update the program of study and requirements no less frequently than every 10 years.

(h) The department shall promulgate regulations for the implementation, administration and enforcement of this section.

SECTION 3. (a) There shall be a special commission on the school and district assessment and accountability system.

(b) The commission shall review the Commonwealth's current assessment and accountability system, including provisions in sections 1I, 1J and 1K of chapter 69 of the General Laws that affect the performance, efficacy and impact of the school and district assessment and accountability system. The commission shall develop recommendations, including proposed amendments to sections 1I, 1J and 1K of chapter 69 of the General Laws, on ways to improve the Commonwealth's school and district assessment and accountability system.

The special commission shall consider (i) changes to the accountability system that include a broader range of measures that align with public values and are less tied to student demography; (ii) the strengths and weaknesses of the current school and district assessment and accountability system; (iii) how this system is contributing to better opportunities and outcomes for all students, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds; (iv) the extent that students, educators, families and other stakeholders are being well served or not by this system; (v) what we can learn from new assessment and accountability approaches and models in Massachusetts and other states; (vi) how much flexibility Massachusetts has to make changes given federal laws and regulations; and (vii) any other considerations that the commission deems necessary.

(c) Commission members shall include the following: the house and senate chairs of the joint committee on education, who shall serve as co-chairs; 1 member appointed by the speaker of the house of representatives; 1 member appointed by the president of the senate; 1 member appointed by the minority leader of the house of representatives; 1 member appointed by the minority leader of the senate; the commissioner of elementary and secondary education or designee; the secretary of education or designee; and 1 member to be appointed by each of the following organizations: Massachusetts Association of School Committees, Inc.; Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents, Inc.; Massachusetts Teachers Association; American

103 Federation of Teachers Massachusetts; Massachusetts Charter Public School Association;
104 Massachusetts Association of Vocational Administrators; Massachusetts Association of Regional
105 Schools; the Education Commonwealth Project; Massachusetts Taxpayers Foundation;
106 Massachusetts School Administrators' Association; and Massachusetts Business Alliance for
107 Education; and 4 additional members to be appointed by the Governor representing a range of
108 stakeholders with diversity in geography, backgrounds and experience.

109 (d) The department shall hold not less than 5 public hearings in geographically diverse
110 regions across the commonwealth to solicit public input on the school and district assessment
111 and accountability system.

112 (e) The commission shall report its findings and recommendations, including drafts of
113 any proposed legislation, to the clerks of the senate and house of representatives and joint
114 committee on education no later than June 30, 2027.

115 (f) While the special commission performs the review as required by this section,
116 subsections (r), (s), (v)(1) and(w)(2)-(3) of section 1J of chapter 69 of the general laws and the
117 second paragraph of subsection (a) and subsection (e) of section 1K of said chapter 69 shall not
118 be in effect.