

SENATE No. 822

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PRESENTED BY:

Lydia Edwards

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 instructing the board of higher education to engage house of corrections and state prisons.

PETITION OF:

NAME:	DISTRICT/ADDRESS:	
<i>Lydia Edwards</i>	<i>Third Suffolk</i>	
<i>Sal N. DiDomenico</i>	<i>Middlesex and Suffolk</i>	<i>2/11/2023</i>
<i>Russell E. Holmes</i>	<i>6th Suffolk</i>	<i>2/22/2023</i>

SENATE No. 822

By Ms. Edwards, a petition (accompanied by bill, Senate, No. 822) of Lydia Edwards, Sal N. DiDomenico and Russell E. Holmes for legislation to instruct the board of higher education to engage house of corrections and state prisons. Higher Education.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

**In the One Hundred and Ninety-Third General Court
(2023-2024)**

An Act instructing the board of higher education to engage house of corrections and state prisons.

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 16 of chapter 15A of the General Laws is hereby amended by
2 inserting after subsection Section 16 the following subsection:-

3 Section 16(a). As used in this subsection, the following words shall have the following
4 meanings:

5 “Credit status”, currently incarcerated persons as well as most recently released persons
6 who, during the term of incarceration, completed and received certification of requirements for
7 an award of a General Equivalency Diploma (GED) with Credit and have been determined to be
8 eligible for acceptance into freshman level, for-credit study at a public institution of higher
9 education in Massachusetts;

10 “incarcerated person”, a committed offender or such other person as is placed in custody
11 in a correctional facility in accordance with law;

12 “recently released”, release of a previously incarcerated person from a county jail, house
13 of correction, or state prison to a non-custodial status that has occurred during the ninety (90)
14 days previous to the most recent specific outreach of financial aid staff required in Section 16(b).

15 “public institution of higher education”, a system of public institutions of higher
16 education as so defined in Section 5 of Chapter 15A of the General Laws

17 SECTION 2. Section 16 of Chapter 15A of the General Laws is hereby amended by
18 inserting after Section 16 the following subsections:-

19 Section 16(b). The general scholarship program referenced in Section 16 of Chapter 15A
20 shall include a separate and specific outreach to each county Jail, House of Correction, and State
21 Prison by financial aid staff of each public institution of higher education.

22 The Board of Higher Education shall oversee and supervise this outreach to ensure timely
23 identification, at least twice per calendar year, by region, individuals who have obtained Credit
24 Status. County Sheriffs in tandem with the Commissioner of Correction shall ensure reciprocal
25 cooperation in this outreach by compiling twice a year a record of current incarcerated persons
26 and most recently released persons who meet the requirements for acceptance into a public
27 institution of higher education in Massachusetts.

28 16(c) In cases where a most recently incarcerated person has met the requirements for
29 GED with credit status but has subsequently been released, the Sheriff and the Commissioner of
30 Correction shall provide to the financial aid staff representative of a public institution of higher
31 education the last known information concerning the anticipated place of residence and, if
32 available, contact information for the most recently released person.

33 (i) The financial aid staff representative of the public institution of higher education
34 shall, upon engagement of the qualified incarcerated person or most recently released person,
35 provide specific counsel and offer expedient assistance to facilitate the current incarcerated
36 person's or most recently released person's enrollment into freshman level for credit study in the
37 next available semester, at the public institution of higher education. In the case of current
38 qualified incarcerated person, this offer of assistance and expedited enrollment shall occur within
39 thirty days of the incarcerated person's scheduled release from the House of Correction or the
40 State Prison. This facilitated and expedited assistance shall include the provision of financial
41 aid, including need-based scholarships, to cover all costs of enrollment and study during the
42 initial semester following release and shall be available to the student for each subsequent
43 semester of study through completion of requirements for the award of a Certificate or Diploma.

44 16(d) The Board of Higher Education shall file an annual Report to the House and Senate
45 Ways & Means Committees and the Joint Committee on the Judiciary and the Joint Committee
46 on Public Safety & Security concerning the annual results of this outreach and engagement
47 initiative.