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HOUSE . . . . . No. 4011

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

In the One Hundred and Eighty-Ninth General Court
(2015-2016)

An Act relative to school attendance.

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

SECTION 1. Section 1B of chapter 69 of the General Laws, as appearing in the 2014 Official Edition, is hereby amended by striking lines 117 to 120, inclusive, and inserting in place thereof the following paragraph:-

The board shall promulgate regulations establishing the mandatory ages for school attendance, including the minimum and maximum permissible ages for school attendance, provided that each child shall be required to attend an approved kindergarten program in a public or private setting or in a community-based program licensed by the department of early education and care. Said regulations shall include mandatory attendance guidelines necessary for kindergarten completion. Said regulations shall include a process for school districts or Commonwealth charter schools to provide exemptions for advanced students to attend school beginning in first grade. Said regulations shall also address the types of alternative education programs or settings that are suitable for individuals who exceed the maximum permissible age of attendance who do not have a high school diploma or the equivalent.

14 SECTION 2. Subject to appropriation, the department of elementary and secondary
15 education shall develop and administer a 3-year pilot program for dropout prevention and
16 recovery programs for school districts with annual dropout rates greater than the state average.
17 The pilot program shall be a competitive grant process for school districts or local community
18 agencies serving students who reside in these districts. The dropout prevention and recovery
19 programs shall target high school students who have dropped out of school or are at risk of
20 dropping out of school using at least 1 of the following methods:

21 a) Alternative education, which shall mean diploma or general educational
22 development granting programs that use evidence-based instruction and student support
23 strategies designed to meet the needs of the target population and prepare them for postsecondary
24 education or training. These evidence-based instruction and student support strategies may
25 include, but are not limited to, smaller class size, competency-based learning, project-based
26 learning, work-based learning, community service learning, graduation coaching, case
27 management, family engagement, wraparound support, restorative justice and social service
28 referrals.

29 b) Graduation coaches, who shall be professionals with youth development and
30 academic support expertise who shall provide the target population with graduation plans. The
31 graduation plans shall include, at a minimum, academic, career and postsecondary goals.
32 Graduation coaches shall also provide follow-up support to complete the graduation plans,
33 navigate academic requirements, engage families, overcome socio-emotional barriers and secure
34 appropriate social services.

35 c) Dropout outreach and recovery programs, which shall mean targeted outreach and
36 transition support for students who have dropped out of school. The programs shall, at a
37 minimum, reach out to students, determine their academic status and personal circumstances,
38 assist students in enrolling in a high school or general educational development program, provide
39 transitional support and track students' academic progress.

40 d) Expectant and parenting student support, which may include, but is not limited to,
41 the development and implementation of school policies that set high academic expectations,
42 establish procedures for maternity and paternity leave, and provide flexible scheduling; expectant
43 and parenting student liaisons who shall work with students to develop graduation plans that
44 include, at a minimum, academic, career and postsecondary goals and who provide follow-up
45 support to complete the graduation plans, navigate academic requirements, engage families,
46 overcome socio-emotional barriers and secure appropriate social services; and, annual data
47 collection that shall include, but is not limited to, the number of parenting students in the district,
48 any supports or interventions provided to the parenting students, and parenting student progress
49 toward and completion of secondary school.

50 The department shall develop guidelines for an annual review of the progress being made
51 by each district and local community agency participating in the pilot program. Each district and
52 agency in the pilot program shall participate in any evaluation or accountability process
53 implemented by or authorized by the department. The department shall prepare and submit an
54 annual report describing and analyzing the implementation of the pilot program in all
55 participating districts. The report shall include, but not be limited to, the number of participating
56 school districts, schools and local community agencies; the number of students served and the
57 type and duration of those services; the progress made by those students toward attaining a high

58 school diploma or general educational development; and the number of students served who
59 have attained a high school diploma or passed the general educational development test. The
60 department shall file its annual report no later than September 1 of each year by filing the same
61 with the clerks of the house of representatives and the senate who shall forward a copy of the
62 report to the joint committee on education. The department shall file a final report within 6
63 months of the conclusion of the 3 year pilot period that shall include an analysis of all relevant
64 data so as to determine the effectiveness of the program and specific legislative
65 recommendations, including whether the program should be expanded, maintained or
66 discontinued, by filing the same with the clerks of the house of representatives and the senate
67 who shall forward a copy of the report to the joint committee on education.