SENATE DOCKET, NO. 869 FILED ON: 1/17/2013

SENATE . . . . . No. 237

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PRESENTED BY:

***Jennifer L. Flanagan*, (BY REQUEST)**

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 enhancing student opportunity for achievement and results.

PETITION OF:

NAME:	DISTRICT/ADDRESS:
Karen Arbuckle	*Townsend, MA*
Kay Khan	*11th Middlesex*

SENATE DOCKET, NO. 869 FILED ON: 1/17/2013

SENATE . . . . . No. 237

By Ms. Flanagan (by request), a petition (accompanied by bill, Senate, No. 237) of Karen Arbuckle and Kay Khan for legislation relative to reducing the size of certain classes and enhancing student opportunity for achievement and results. Education.

[SIMILAR MATTER FILED IN PREVIOUS SESSION
SEE HOUSE, NO. *176* OF 2011-2012.]

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

In the Year Two Thousand Thirteen

An Act enhancing student opportunity for achievement and results.

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. Chapter 71 of the General Laws, as appearing in the 2008 Official Edition, is hereby amended by adding the following section:-

Section 90. Student Opportunity for Achievement and Results

(a) Subject to appropriation, the department shall establish a 4 year grant program, Student Opportunity for Achievement and Results (SOAR), to assist schools in reducing class size in grades kindergarten through 3 to a ratio of 1 teacher to 15-18 students, or, where space is unavailable, to a ratio of 2 teachers to 30 students, and to study the effects of class size reduction on student performance.

(b) The department shall develop guidelines and regulations for the administration of the grant program in accordance with the following provisions:

(1) In order for a school district to be eligible, for this program, 25 percent or more of the district's students shall be eligible for free or reduced lunch under eligibility guidelines promulgated by the federal government under 42 U.S.C. 1758.

(2) In determining which schools within an eligible school district shall implement this program, the district shall prioritize schools that meet one or both of the following criteria:

16 (i) The schools have been deemed underperforming or chronically underperforming, as
17 under section 1J of chapter 69, as so appearing.

18 (ii) The schools have the highest percentage of students eligible for the free or reduced
19 lunch program within the district.

20 (3) All schools that participate shall do so for the full 4 years of the program and shall
21 phase-in the program as follows: In the first year of the program, participating schools will
22 reduce all kindergarten class sizes; in the second year, kindergarten classes will remain at the
23 reduced size and schools will reduce all grade 1 class sizes; in the third year, kindergarten and
24 grade 1 class sizes will remain at the reduced size and participating schools will reduce all grade
25 2 class sizes; and in the fourth year, kindergarten, grade 1 and grade 2 class sizes will remain at
26 the reduced size and participating schools will reduce all grade 3 class sizes.

27 (4) The department shall align and coordinate the grant with other early education efforts
28 in the Commonwealth.

29 (5) Teachers in small-sized classes shall receive training and professional development
30 on instructional strategies to optimize the use of small class size.

31 (c) Grants shall be used to supplement, not supplant, federal, state or local funds for these
32 activities.

33 (d) Program funds shall only be used for hiring of personnel, professional development,
34 or extra materials for reduced sized classrooms. For the purposes of this section only,
35 professional development may include per diem payments of substitute teachers when they
36 substitute for a small-sized class teacher who is absent in order to pursue professional
37 development in small class instructional strategies.

38 (e) The department shall establish statewide criteria for professional development that
39 would qualify under clause (8) of subsection (b) of section 90 of the general laws, as so
40 appearing.

41 (f) The department shall assess the efficacy of reduced class size in the early years in
42 enhancing student achievement.

43 (g) The department may allocate a reasonable sum for research, evaluation and
44 administration.

45 (h) The department shall report annually on the status of the program to the joint
46 committee on education by September 1 following each school year of the program.

47 SECTION 2. Notwithstanding section 1 of this act or any general or special law to the
48 contrary, the department of elementary and secondary education shall establish and implement a
49 SOAR pilot program, subject to appropriation, for three schools that meet the criteria in

50 subsection (b) of section 1 of this act and that the department deems to be in special need of
51 improving school performance.

52 The purpose and goals of this SOAR pilot program shall include, but not be limited to:
53 (1) establishing a class size of 15-18 pupils in grades K-3, starting with K, as outlined in section
54 1 of this act; (2) evaluating the efficacy of such a program in reducing gaps in achievement
55 between at-risk and other children; and (3) planning, professional development, and other
56 activities that enhance the capacity of the schools to develop a successful program.