

SENATE No. 266

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PRESENTED BY:

Sal N. DiDomenico

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 improve educational outcomes for children in the Commonwealth from birth through school age.

PETITION OF:

NAME:	DISTRICT/ADDRESS:
Sal N. DiDomenico	Middlesex and Suffolk
Jason M. Lewis	Fifth Middlesex
F. Jay Barrows	1st Bristol
Joan B. Lovely	Second Essex
David M. Nangle	17th Middlesex
Angelo L. D'Emilia	8th Plymouth
Eileen M. Donoghue	First Middlesex
Edward F. Coppinger	10th Suffolk
Anne M. Gobi	Worcester, Hampden, Hampshire and Middlesex
James B. Eldridge	Middlesex and Worcester
Susan Williams Gifford	2nd Plymouth
Brian A. Joyce	Norfolk, Bristol and Plymouth
Jose F. Tosado	9th Hampden
Daniel J. Hunt	13th Suffolk
Daniel A. Wolf	Cape and Islands
John J. Lawn, Jr.	10th Middlesex

SENATE No. 266

By Mr. DiDomenico, a petition (accompanied by bill, Senate, No. 266) of Sal N. DiDomenico, Jason M. Lewis, F. Jay Barrows, Joan B. Lovely and other members of the General Court for legislation to improve educational outcomes for children in the Commonwealth from birth through school age. Education.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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

An Act to improve educational outcomes for children in the Commonwealth from birth through school age.

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 1 of Chapter 15D of the General Laws is hereby amended by
2 inserting after the first paragraph the following new paragraph:-

3 In order to support families in promoting child development and school-readiness and in
4 entering and remaining in the workforce it is hereby further declared to be the policy of the
5 Commonwealth to provide quality early education and care programs and services to all families
6 that meet the eligibility requirements established by the department.

7 SECTION 2.

8 (a) Within 120 days of the date of enactment of this legislation, the board of early
9 education and care shall submit a plan to the governor, the secretary of administration and
10 finance, the secretary of education, the joint committee on education, the senate and house

11 committees on ways and means, and the clerks of the senate and the house of representatives,
12 setting forth a plan for the implementation of the policy set forth in the second paragraph of
13 Section 1 of Chapter 15D of the General Laws. The plan shall include a schedule for phasing in
14 implementation of the policy over a period of not more than two years. Under the plan, all
15 families on the department's waitlist shall be given access to a voucher or a contract slot not later
16 than 90 days after the date that the report is submitted, and implementation of the policy shall be
17 completed not later than two years after the date that the report is submitted, so as to ensure that
18 all families that seek early education and care programs and services through the department and
19 meet the eligibility requirements established by the department shall receive quality early
20 education and care programs and services. The report shall state the level of appropriation
21 necessary for implementation of the plan.

22 The plan shall also include an analysis of the cost of expanding eligibility to other
23 categories of children, including but not limited to children whose parents are not currently
24 working, and recommendations for narrowing the gap between early educators' wages and the
25 average starting salary of public school teachers with similar credentials pursuant to the Special
26 Commission's report of December 2013.

27 SECTION 3. Chapter 15D is hereby amended by inserting after section 2 the following
28 sections:-

29 Section 2A. (a) The department shall ensure that eligibility requirements are in the best
30 interest of all children, regardless of whether the child's parents are currently working.

31 (b) The department shall ensure that eligibility requirements are not more restrictive than
32 those in place as of January 1, 2015.

33 Section 2B. (a) In establishing a rate structure for voucher and contracted payments to
34 providers of subsidized early education and care programs and services on behalf of low-income
35 and other at-risk children, the department shall consider the following factors:

36 (i) Whether the payment rates support families and providers of early education and care
37 programs and services in promoting child development and school-readiness;

38 (ii) Whether the payment rates are sufficient to ensure that families that are eligible for
39 subsidies for early education and care programs and services have the same access to these
40 programs and services as families that are not eligible, as required by section 658E(c)(4)(A) of
41 the federal Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 1990, 42 U.S.C. section 9858c;

42 (iii) Whether the payment rates reflect the actual cost of providing quality early education
43 and care programs and services to children and families;

44 (iv) Variations in costs of providing quality early education and care programs and
45 services in different settings and geographic regions and to children of different age groups; and

46 (v) The additional cost of providing quality early education and care programs and
47 services to children with special needs or other risk factors.

48 (b) On an annual basis the department shall review and revise as necessary the rate
49 structure for voucher and contracted payments. Rates shall be increased annually by a
50 percentage equal to the greater of 3 per cent or the prior year's increase in the Consumer Price
51 Index as determined by the Bureau of Labor Statistics of the United States Department of Labor.

52 (c) In allocating revenues resulting from any increase in contract and voucher
53 reimbursement rates from year to year, a provider of subsidized early education and care

54 programs and services on behalf of low-income and other at-risk children shall give priority to
55 increasing salaries paid to classroom staff and other staff working directly with children and
56 families receiving early education and care services. The increases may also be allocated to other
57 expenditures that support delivery of quality early education and care programs and services,
58 including but not limited to expenditures to meet requirements established by the Legislature and
59 the department, expenditures to promote staff retention and expenditures for professional
60 development.