

SENATE No. 650

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PRESENTED BY:

William N. Brownsberger

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 creating a sexual assault climate survey for Massachusetts colleges and universities.

PETITION OF:

NAME:

DISTRICT/ADDRESS:

William N. Brownsberger

Second Suffolk and Middlesex

Lori A. Ehrlich

8th Essex

SENATE No. 650

By Mr. Brownsberger, a petition (accompanied by bill, Senate, No. 650) of William N. Brownsberger and Lori A. Ehrlich for legislation to create a sexual assault climate survey for Massachusetts colleges and universities. Higher Education.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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**In the One Hundred and Eighty-Ninth General Court
(2015-2016)**
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An Act creating a sexual assault climate survey for Massachusetts colleges and universities.

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

1 There shall be established a task force on sexual assault on college campuses, hereinafter
2 referred to as the task force. The task force shall be co-chaired by designees of the Commissioner
3 of Higher Education, the Attorney General, and the Commissioner of Public Health. In addition
4 to the co-chairs, the task force shall include a representative chosen by the Jane Doe Institute
5 (JDI), a representative chosen by the Boston Area Rape Crisis Center (BARCC), a representative
6 chosen by the Center for Hope and Healing (CHH) in Lowell, a representative chosen by Fenway
7 Health’s Violence Recovery Program (VRP), a representative chosen by the Association of
8 Independent Colleges and Universities in Massachusetts (AICUM), the Senate President or his
9 designee, and the Speaker of the House or his designee.

10 The task force shall develop a sexual assault climate survey to be issued to college
11 students across Massachusetts with the goal of determining the prevalence and perceptions of
12 sexual assault on college campuses. The role of the task force in implementing the

13 aforementioned climate survey shall include, but not be limited to, the following: (i) designing
14 the survey questions and mode of implementation; (ii) determining which colleges shall receive
15 the survey; (iii) consulting college officials in order to optimize the survey; and (iv) any other
16 necessary role determined by the task force.

17 The survey shall be fully anonymous and shall not include any personally identifiable
18 information. The task force shall develop the survey using best practices from peer-reviewed
19 research measuring sexual violence and harassment. The survey shall be designed to gather, to
20 the possible, information about, but not be limited to, the following topics: (i) the incidence and
21 prevalence of sexual violence, dating violence, domestic violence, and stalking; (ii) students’
22 knowledge of institutional policies and procedures; (iii) if victims reported the violence, to whom
23 did they report, what response did they receive, and were they were informed of, or referred to,
24 local, State, on-campus, or national resources; (iv) contextual factors, such as whether force,
25 incapacitation, or coercion was involved; (v) demographic factors that could be used to identify
26 at-risk groups; and (v) whether the assailants were students. The task force shall develop the
27 survey not more than 1 year after the task force is first convened.

28 The Commissioner of Higher Education shall require colleges and universities, as
29 deemed necessary by the task force, to ensure that an adequate, random, and representative
30 sample of students enrolled at the institution completes the climate survey not later than 1 year
31 after the task force has developed the final survey. In addition to the standardized questions
32 developed by the task force, institutions completing the survey may request additional
33 information from students that would increase the institutions’ understanding of school climate
34 factors unique to their campuses.

35 Each four-year college identified by the task force shall provide the individual responses
36 to the campus climate survey to the task force within 90 days of the administration of the survey.
37 The task force shall analyze the sexual assault incident data and shall publish a report based on
38 the data, their deliberations, and any hearings they may conduct. The report shall be made
39 available for comment to participating colleges and universities as well as the Association for
40 Independent Colleges and Universities of Massachusetts (AICUM) at least 30 days prior to
41 publication, and the task force shall consider revisions to the report in response to suggestions
42 and concerns raised by participating colleges. After revisions have been finalized, the task force
43 shall file the report with the Commissioner of Higher Education.

44 Following the filing of the report, the task force shall convene to determine future steps.
45 These steps may include, but not be limited to: (i) revising and modifying the original climate
46 survey as the task force deems necessary; (ii) determining that a similar survey shall be
47 implemented repeatedly, at an interval to be determined by the task force; (iii) making
48 recommendations for interventions to reduce the likelihood of sexual assault based on the results
49 of the survey; or (iv) any additional further steps deemed necessary by the task force.