

SENATE No. 2469

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

In the One Hundred and Ninetieth General Court
(2017-2018)

SENATE, Monday, April 23, 2018

The committee on Higher Education, to whom was referred the petitions (accompanied by resolutions, Senate, No. 672) of Sal N. DiDomenico, William N. Brownsberger, Barbara A. L'Italien, Jason M. Lewis and other members of the General Court for legislation to support efforts to ensure that students from Massachusetts have access to debt-free higher education at public colleges and universities; (accompanied by bill, Senate, No. 681) of James B. Eldridge, Jack Lewis, Jason M. Lewis, Mike Connolly and other members of the General Court for legislation to promote access to debt-free public higher education; (accompanied by bill, Senate, No. 692) of Eric P. Lesser, Sal N. DiDomenico and Brian M. Ashe for legislation relative to community college tuition; (accompanied by bill, Senate, No. 700) of Mark C. Montigny, Kevin G. Honan, Eric P. Lesser and Sal N. DiDomenico for legislation to establish the Bridge the Gap Scholarship to universalize access to community colleges; (accompanied by bill, Senate, No. 2088) of Michael O. Moore for legislation to exempt residents of the Commonwealth from payment of tuition or mandatory curriculum fees at community colleges; (accompanied by resolutions, House, No. 638) of Paul W. Mark and others for the adoption of resolutions by the General Court relative to debt-free higher education at public colleges and universities; and (accompanied by bill, House, No. 3005) of John C. Velis for an investigation by a special commission to study student load debt,- reports the accompanying resolve (Senate, No. 2469).

For the committee,
Michael O. Moore

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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Resolve establishing a commission on tuition and fee-free and debt-free public higher education.

1 **Resolved**, There shall be a special commission on tuition and fee-free and debt-free
2 public higher education to consist of: the commissioner of higher education, or a designee, who
3 shall serve as chair; the president of the University of Massachusetts system or a designee; a
4 representative selected by the council of presidents of the state university system; a
5 representative selected by the Massachusetts Community Colleges executive office; the senate
6 and house chairs of the Joint Committee on Higher Education or their designees; and 5 persons
7 to be appointed by the commissioner of the department of higher education, 1 of whom shall be
8 selected from a list of 3 nominees submitted by the Massachusetts Teachers Association, 1 of
9 whom shall be selected from a list of 3 nominees submitted by the Massachusetts Budget and
10 Policy Center, 1 of whom shall be selected from a list of 3 nominees submitted by the Public
11 Higher Education Network of Massachusetts; 1 of whom shall be from the American Student
12 Assistance and 1 of whom shall be a student representative currently enrolled in a public higher
13 education institution in the commonwealth.

14 The commission shall examine and make recommendations on the creation of tuition and
15 fee-free and debt-free college programs in the Commonwealth including, but not limited to: (i)

16 student eligibility including possible requirements for state residency, maximum family income,
17 academic thresholds/GPA, and enrollment status (full-time or part-time); (ii) which public
18 institutions would be eligible, enrollment shifts that may occur, and the potential effect on
19 academic program quality; (iii) the cost to fund the various models explored, including the
20 ordering of state and federal aid required to be applied as “first dollar” or “last dollar” and the
21 cost of covering indirect costs such as books, housing, transportation or other significant
22 matriculation costs; (iv) the potential impact of debt-free college on student debt and degree
23 completion; and (iv) review of currently offered debt-free proposals in other states.

24 The first meeting of the commission shall take place within 45 days after the effective
25 date of this section. The commission shall file a report detailing its recommendations with the
26 clerks of the senate and house of representatives on or before July 31, 2018.