

SENATE No. 334

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PRESENTED BY:

James T. Welch

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 relative to birth to 3 early education.

PETITION OF:

NAME:	DISTRICT/ADDRESS:	
<i>James T. Welch</i>	<i>Hampden</i>	
<i>Eric P. Lesser</i>	<i>First Hampden and Hampshire</i>	<i>2/3/2017</i>

SENATE No. 334

By Mr. Welch, a petition (accompanied by bill, Senate, No. 334) of James T. Welch and Eric P. Lesser for legislation relative to birth to 3 early education. Education.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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

An Act relative to birth to 3 early education.

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. Whereas, research has established that the first three years of a child’s life
2 are the most critical period in his or her intellectual, social, linguistic, and emotional
3 development; and whereas the earliest experiences in the first three years of life provide the
4 foundation for the behaviors, skills, and competencies that support lifelong learning and
5 development; and whereas the earliest experiences in the first three years of life can dramatically
6 shape and support brain development into adulthood, providing the foundation for school
7 readiness and success in school and in life; and

8 Whereas, children who have not received appropriate educational experiences during the
9 first three years of life are far less likely to enter pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten school
10 ready, to read at grade level by fourth grade, to graduate from high school, and to participate in
11 the workforce, and are far more likely to engage in negative and criminal behaviors at enormous
12 cost to the entire community; and

13 Whereas, despite the expanded availability of early learning programs such as Head Start
14 and pre-kindergarten, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts has no comprehensive program to
15 address the educational needs of children from birth to age 3; therefore,

16 SECTION 2. Chapter 15D of the General Laws is hereby amended to insert after Section
17 13 a new Section 13A, as follows:

18 Section 13A. (a) The board shall establish a program to be known as the Massachusetts
19 Birth to 3 Education Program to provide high quality early education and care programs to
20 children in this age group living in Gateway Cities and other communities of concentrated
21 poverty in the Commonwealth.

22 (b) The program shall provide high-quality supports and educational services to families
23 with children birth to 3 to enhance their children’s ability to make age appropriate progress in the
24 development of cognitive, linguistic, social, emotional and physical capacities to promote school
25 readiness;

26 (c) The Massachusetts Birth to 3 Education Program shall be delivered through a mixed
27 system of providers and programs, with an emphasis on in-home programs that are sufficiently
28 flexible to serve families with various work schedules.

29 (d) The department shall develop a method for funding the program, which may include:

30 (i) providing grants to, or entering into contracts with any provider of birth to age 3 education
31 programs, or entities coordinating or administering plans to provide high-quality, comprehensive
32 services to children birth to age 3 and their families within the local community; (ii) directly
33 contracting with any provider of birth to age 3 education programs, or entities coordinating or
34 administering plans to provide high-quality, comprehensive services to children birth to age 3

35 and their families within the local community; or (iii) providing vouchers to families with birth
36 to age 3 children to secure services from any provider of birth to age 3 education programs, or
37 entities coordinating or administering plans to provide high-quality, comprehensive services to
38 children birth to age 3 and their families within the local community.

39 (e) Providers eligible to participate in and receive funding from Massachusetts Birth to 3
40 Education Program may include, but are not limited to: public; private; non-profit and for-profit
41 providers; child care centers; Head Start programs; independent and system-affiliated family
42 child care homes; housing authorities constituted under chapter 121B, and local early education
43 and care councils.

44 (f) All providers shall demonstrate that they are willing and able to serve and integrate
45 children of diverse abilities and special needs, diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds and
46 diverse economic circumstances to participate in and receive funding from Massachusetts Birth
47 to 3 Education Program.