

HOUSE No.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PRESENTED BY:

Natalie M. Higgins

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 debt free futures for essential workers.

PETITION OF:

NAME:	DISTRICT/ADDRESS:	DATE ADDED:
<i>Natalie M. Higgins</i>	<i>4th Worcester</i>	<i>6/22/2020</i>
<i>Mindy Domb</i>	<i>3rd Hampshire</i>	<i>6/23/2020</i>
<i>David Henry Argosky LeBoeuf</i>	<i>17th Worcester</i>	<i>6/23/2020</i>
<i>Jack Patrick Lewis</i>	<i>7th Middlesex</i>	<i>6/23/2020</i>
<i>Paul W. Mark</i>	<i>2nd Berkshire</i>	<i>6/23/2020</i>
<i>Lindsay N. Sabadosa</i>	<i>1st Hampshire</i>	<i>6/23/2020</i>
<i>Aaron Vega</i>	<i>5th Hampden</i>	<i>6/24/2020</i>
<i>Christine P. Barber</i>	<i>34th Middlesex</i>	<i>6/25/2020</i>
<i>Carlos González</i>	<i>10th Hampden</i>	<i>6/25/2020</i>
<i>Tricia Farley-Bouvier</i>	<i>3rd Berkshire</i>	<i>6/29/2020</i>

HOUSE No.

By Ms. Higgins of Leominster, a petition (subject to Joint Rule 12) of Natalie M. Higgins and others that the Department of Higher Education create a grant program for essential workers enrolled at certain public institutions. Higher Education.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

**In the One Hundred and Ninety-First General Court
(2019-2020)**

An Act relative to debt free futures for essential workers.

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

1 Chapter 15A of the General Laws, as appearing in the 2016 Official Edition, is hereby
2 amended by inserting, after section 16, the following new section:-

3 Section 16A. (a) Definitions

4 As used in this section, the following words shall have the following meanings, unless the
5 context clearly requires otherwise:

6 “Eligible Borrower,” a resident of the commonwealth, who is a graduate or former
7 student who accrued student loan debt while enrolled in a Massachusetts public college or
8 university or other public certificate, vocational, or adult education program.

9 “Eligible Student,” a resident of the commonwealth as determined by the board of higher
10 education's residency status for tuition classification purposes, who has attained a high school
11 diploma or its equivalent in the commonwealth, who is admitted to and enrolled in a

12 Massachusetts public college or university or other public certificate, vocational, or adult
13 education program, and who is enrolled full-time or part-time, and who maintains a cumulative
14 GPA of 2.0 or above.

15 “Essential Worker,” a worker reporting on-site to perform "COVID-19 Essential
16 Services" as defined in the Governor's March 23, 2020 emergency order (“COVID-19 Order No.
17 13”) or in the Governor's March 31, 2020 extension order (“COVID-19 Order No. 21”), or under
18 any order further extending these orders.

19 (b) Notwithstanding the provisions of any general or special law to the contrary, the
20 Department of Higher Education shall create a Debt Free Futures for Essential Workers Grant
21 Program to provide a grant of \$10,000 to an eligible student at any Massachusetts public college
22 or university, or certificate, vocational, or training program at a public institution, to pay the
23 tuition and mandatory fees and other costs related to attendance, or up to \$10,000 to an eligible
24 borrower to assist in the repayment of their student loan debt .

25 (c) The grant shall supplement and shall not replace state grants, gift aid, institutional aid,
26 or federal aid through the Free Application for Federal Student Aid process. The Department of
27 Higher Education shall establish guidelines governing said program, to ensure funds from this
28 program do not affect eligibility for other state grants, gift aid, institutional aid, or federal aid
29 through the Free Application for Federal Student Aid process.

30 (d) All public higher education and public vocational training institutions shall be
31 considered eligible institutions for this program and there shall be no restrictions on a student’s
32 choice of academic programs.

33 (e) The Department of Higher Education shall provide the Joint Committee on Higher
34 Education of the General Court a report analyzing the usage, achievements and costs of this
35 program, together with recommendations for its future, no later than 120 days following the
36 program's first year of operation.