

SENATE No. 294

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PRESENTED BY:

Donald F. Humason, Jr., (BY REQUEST)

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 limiting school screen time.

PETITION OF:

NAME:

Kirstin Beatty

DISTRICT/ADDRESS:

SENATE No. 294

By Mr. Humason (by request), a petition (accompanied by bill, Senate, No. 294) of Kirstin Beatty for legislation to limit school screen time. Education.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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

An Act limiting school screen time.

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. Chapter 69 of the General Laws, as appearing in the 2016 Official Edition,
2 is hereby amended by inserting, after Section 36, the following section:-

3 (a) As used in this section, the following words shall have the following meanings:

4 “Screen time” is time viewing a technological or digital screen which includes but is not
5 limited to a television, a smart board, projector, or computer.

6 “Passive screen time” is time viewing a technological or digital screen in which one only
7 observes and does not interact or alter the screen by typing or otherwise moving the body.

8 “Interactive screen time” is time viewing and interacting with or altering a technological
9 or digital screen by typing or otherwise moving the body.

10 “Virtual reality” is an interactive screen time experience taking place in a simulated
11 visual environment, either real or imagined, and may incorporate auditory and sensory feedback.

12 Augmented reality systems is a type of virtual reality in which perception of the real world is
13 augmented by computer-generated perceptual information such as visual, auditory, haptic,
14 somatosensory, and olfactory.

15 (b) It shall be unlawful for any student enrolled in either public primary or secondary
16 schools in the Commonwealth to exceed screen time limits or during school hours and through
17 related school assignments after school hours, except as when substantially beneficial to relieve
18 disability.

19 It shall further be unlawful to mandate screen time as a condition of mandated public
20 primary and secondary coursework or school activities.

21 Courses or school activities that revolve around screen time must be voluntary, and
22 screen time requirements in those activities highly relevant to the subject matter of the course or
23 school activity. Participation in courses or school activities with additional screen time, whether
24 foreign language, computer language, or other relevant subject, must obtain student legal
25 guardian consent while providing justification for the additional screen time and explaining how
26 risks of excessive screen time will be limited. Additional screen time outside the parameters of
27 the screen time limits must be approved not only by student legal guardians, but by a Technology
28 Safety Council that is inclusive and not exclusive of district or school parents, teachers, and legal
29 guardians.

30 Use of virtual reality shall be preceded by notice of any potential risks or cautionary
31 warnings accompanying use, obtain legal guardian consent, and shall be not be used by children
32 or adolescents through the age of fourteen.

33 Each school committee shall establish a policy dealing with students and staff who
34 violate this law that includes consequences to prevent violations and may include redirection.
35 This policy may include but not be limited to mandatory education on the hazards of excessive
36 screen time. Nothing in this law preempts more restrictive state or local limitations.

37 (c) Screen time restrictions are provided according to grade level as follows:

38 (1) Pre-K through kindergarten screen time: maximum of zero hours

39 (2) First through second grade passive screen time: maximum two hours per school year;

40 (3) First through second grade interactive screen time: maximum of zero hours

41 (4) Grade three through eight passive screen time: maximum of one hour a day and 2.5
42 hours total in the school year;

43 (5) Grade three through eight interactive screen time: maximum of 20 minutes a day and
44 a maximum of 3.5 hours total in the school year;

45 (6) Grade nine through ten passive screen time: maximum of one hour a day and 5 hours
46 total in the school year;

47 (7) Grade nine through ten interactive screen time: maximum of one hour daily and 12
48 hours total in the school year.

49 (8) Grade eleven through twelve passive screen time: maximum of one hour a day and 7
50 hours total in the school year;

51 (9) Grade eleven through twelve interactive screen time: maximum of one hour daily and
52 12 hours total in the school year.

53 SECTION 2. Section 1I of chapter 69 of the General Laws, as appearing in the 2016
54 Official Edition, is hereby amended by adding the following paragraph after the first paragraph:-

55 Technology shall be optional and not a required school subject. No school, student, or
56 legal guardian shall be treated with prejudice or found wanting in an evaluation due to following
57 a principle of restricting or avoiding student digital technology use or choosing not to purchase
58 or upgrade digital technological equipment. A student or school may safely restrict or avoid
59 digital student technology use and still be provided high marks in evaluation based on other
60 measures, and may pursue alternative models of education such as the Montessori model. Within
61 reason, however, such a school may be expected to insure students understand age-appropriate
62 aspects of digital technology use related to safety, health, responsibility, societal impacts, and
63 privacy.