The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PRESENTED BY:

Ryan C. Fattman

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 an electronic backpack for foster children.

PETITION OF:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>DISTRICT/ADDRESS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ryan C. Fattman</td>
<td>Worcester and Norfolk</td>
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<tr>
<td>Joseph D. McKenna</td>
<td>18th Worcester</td>
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<tr>
<td>Michael J. Soter</td>
<td>8th Worcester</td>
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An Act creating an electronic backpack for foster children.

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

SECTION 1. Chapter 71 of the General Laws, as appearing in the 2016 Official Edition, is hereby amended by inserting at the end thereof the following section:-

Section 98. (a) As used in this section, the following terms shall, unless the context requires otherwise, have the following meanings:-

“Department”, shall mean the department of children and families.

“Free youth”, shall mean a child under the care or custody of the department of children and families or a young adult who has signed a voluntary placement agreement with the department of children and families.
“Electronic backpack”, shall mean an electronic repository of a foster youth’s educational records.

(b) Notwithstanding any general or special law to the contrary, the commissioner of the department, in consultation with the office of the child advocate and the secretary of education, shall develop and implement an electronic backpack program for the educational stability of foster youth.

(b) The department shall create an electronic backpack for each foster youth. The department, in conjunction with the department of education, shall determine the format of the electronic backpack. Each electronic backpack must contain the educational records of the foster youth, including the names and addresses of educational providers, the foster youth’s grade-level performance, and any other educational information that the department requires. The department shall maintain the electronic backpack as part of the department’s records for the foster youth as long as the foster youth remains in foster care.

(c) The department shall make the electronic backpack available to:

(i) Any person authorized by law to make educational decisions for the foster youth;

(ii) Any person authorized to consent to medical care for the foster youth; and

(iii) Any provider of medical care to the foster youth if access to the foster youth’s educational information is necessary for the provision of medical care and is not prohibited by law.

(d) The department shall collaborate with the department of education to develop policies and procedures to ensure that the needs of foster youths are met in every school district.
SECTION 2. The department shall implement the electronic backpack program within one year of the passage of this act.