Section 135 contained in the engrossed Bill making appropriations for the fiscal year 2022 for the maintenance of the departments, boards, commissions, institutions and certain activities of the Commonwealth, for interest, sinking fund and serial bond requirements and for certain permanent improvements (see House, No. 4002), which had been returned by His Excellency the Governor with recommendation of amendment (for message see Attachment R of House, No. 4019). July 22, 2021.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

In the One Hundred and Ninety-Second General Court
(2021-2022)

An Act establishing a higher education affordability task force.

Whereas, The deferred operation of this act would tend to defeat its purpose, which is to establish a higher education affordability task force, therefore it is hereby declared to be an emergency law, necessary for the immediate preservation of the public convenience.

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. (a) There shall be a task force to evaluate the affordability of public and private higher education options in the commonwealth. The evaluation shall include, but not be limited to, the impact of such affordability on: (i) the financial health and longevity of higher education institutions, including, but not limited to, the future role of small private colleges in the commonwealth; and (ii) the workforce pipeline, including, but not limited to: (A) attracting in-state and out-of-state students to higher education institutions in the commonwealth; (B) keeping students in the commonwealth after graduation; (C) the impact of student debt on career and other financial decisions; and (D) the ability of higher education institutions in the
commonwealth to produce a workforce that can meet the employment needs of companies in the
commonwealth and specific job sectors in need of specialized training.

The task force shall consist of: the commissioner of higher education or a designee, who
shall serve as co-chair; the secretary of labor and workforce development or a designee, who
shall serve as co-chair; the chairs of the joint committee on higher education; 1 member
appointed by the minority leader of the senate; 1 member appointed by the minority leader of the
house of representatives; and 12 members appointed by the governor, 1 of whom shall be a
student attending a community college in the commonwealth, 1 of whom shall be a student
attending a public university in the commonwealth, 1 of whom shall be a student attending an
independent institution of higher education in the commonwealth, 1 of whom shall be a
representative of the University of Massachusetts recommended by the president of the
university, 1 of whom shall be a representative of state universities in the commonwealth
recommended by the Massachusetts State Universities Council of Presidents, 1 of whom shall be
a representative of community colleges in the commonwealth recommended by the
Massachusetts Association of Community Colleges, 1 of whom shall be a representative of
private colleges and universities in the commonwealth recommended by the Association of
Independent Colleges and Universities in Massachusetts, Inc., 1 of whom shall be a
representative of the Associated Industries of Massachusetts, Inc., 1 of whom shall be a
representative of the Massachusetts Business Alliance for Education, Inc., 1 of whom shall be a
representative of the Massachusetts Teachers Association, 1 of whom shall be a representative of
the Public Higher Education Network of Massachusetts Inc. and 1 of whom shall be a
representative of the Massachusetts Business Roundtable, Inc. In making appointments, the
governor shall, to the maximum extent feasible, ensure that the task force represents a broad
distribution of diverse perspectives and geographic regions of the commonwealth.

(b) In conducting its evaluation, the task force shall consider: (i) current cost drivers in
higher education and the associated impacts on large, medium and small institutions, including,
but not limited to, trends in student enrollment and changing demographics; (ii) the existing state
requirements to support financial stability in higher education, including, but not limited to, those
established in chapter 113 of the acts of 2019, and any changes to improve implementation of
those requirements, including changes to said chapter 113; (iii) existing federal laws that limit
the ability of higher education institutions to discuss school pricing; (iv) the impact of
affordability of higher education on job opportunities and internships; and (v) the impact of the
COVID-19 pandemic on the affordability and stability of higher education institutions.

SECTION 2. This act shall take effect as of July 1, 2021.