

HOUSE No. 554

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PRESENTED BY:

Antonio F. D. Cabral

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 to require school attendance up to age 18 or until graduation.

PETITION OF:

NAME:	DISTRICT/ADDRESS:	DATE ADDED:
<i>Antonio F. D. Cabral</i>	<i>13th Bristol</i>	<i>2/19/2021</i>
<i>Paul McMurtry</i>	<i>11th Norfolk</i>	<i>2/26/2021</i>
<i>Elizabeth A. Malia</i>	<i>11th Suffolk</i>	<i>3/18/2021</i>
<i>Tami L. Gouveia</i>	<i>14th Middlesex</i>	<i>4/21/2021</i>

HOUSE No. 554

By Mr. Cabral of New Bedford, a petition (accompanied by bill, House, No. 554) of Antonio F. D. Cabral, Paul McMurtry and Elizabeth A. Malia for legislation to establish a special commission to study barriers to high school graduation and to require school attendance up to age 18 or until graduation. Education.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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

An Act to require school attendance up to age 18 or until graduation.

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. Section 1 of chapter 76 of the General Laws, as appearing in the 2018
2 Official Edition, is hereby amended by:—

3 (a) striking out, in lines 1 to 2, the words “between the minimum and maximum ages
4 established for school attendance by the board of education” and inserting in place thereof the
5 following words:-

6 “ages of 6 and 18, having completed at least the twelfth grade or whichever comes first”;
7 and

8 (b) inserting after the word “herewith”, in line 58, the following words:-

9 “, provided that no student over the age of 16 shall face criminal penalties for failure to
10 attend school through the mandatory age for school attendance”.

11 SECTION 2. Section 1B of chapter 69 of the General Laws, as appearing in the 2018
12 Official Edition, is hereby amended by inserting before the period, in line 120, the following
13 words:-

14 “, provided, however, that all children under the age of 18 shall be required to attend
15 school if they have not graduated from high school”.

16 SECTION 3. Chapter 76 of the General Laws, as appearing in the 2018 Official Edition,
17 is hereby amended by inserting after section 21 the following section:-

18 “Section 22. Commission to Study Barriers to High School Graduation.

19 (a) Establishment of Commission. There shall be a special commission, referred to as the
20 ‘High School Graduation Commission’. Said commission shall—

21 (1) investigate and study barriers to high school graduation; and

22 (2) make recommendations regarding the identification of students at risk of dropping out
23 of high school and the targeting of services and programs that will ensure all students can
24 graduate from high school.

25 (b) Members.

26 (1) The commission shall be chaired by the secretary of education or the secretary’s
27 designee.

28 (2) The commissioner of the department of higher education or the commissioner’s
29 designee and the commissioner of the department of elementary and secondary education or the
30 commissioner’s designee shall each be members.

31 (3) The governor shall appoint 4 members, one of whom shall be nominated by the
32 Massachusetts Teachers Association and one of whom shall be nominated by the American
33 Federation of Teachers of Massachusetts.

34 (4) The speaker of the house shall appoint one member and the senate president shall
35 appoint one member.

36 (c) Reporting Requirements. The commission shall report its findings and any legislation
37 necessary to implement said findings to the governor, the clerks of the senate and house of
38 representatives, the senate and house of representatives committees on ways and means, the
39 senate and house of representatives committees on education by December 31, 2022. The
40 commission report shall include but not be limited to: an analysis of the student populations who
41 are at the highest risk of dropping out, mechanisms to identify students who are at risk of
42 dropping out, barriers to high school graduation and evidence based services that reduce and
43 eliminate barriers to high school graduation. In making its recommendations the commission
44 shall consider among other issues—

45 (1) grades, attendance patterns, disciplinary issues, family and environmental factors,
46 breaks or gaps in education, teen parenthood, limited English proficiency and disabilities that
47 may indicate a student is at risk of not completing high school;

48 (2) mechanisms and information technology that can be used to identify students at risk
49 of dropping out and track students' progress once identified;

50 (3) appropriate benchmarks for periodic review of students' progress;

51 (4) wrap around support services designed to effectively target and alleviate or eliminate
52 barriers for students completing high school;

53 (5) methods to reengage students who have left school;

54 (6) dedicated tutoring and academic services for students who have gaps in education as a
55 result of moving, illness, absences, disciplinary issues or immigration;

56 (7) additional preparation and resources to pass the Massachusetts Comprehensive
57 Assessment System (MCAS) or any successor thereto for students who have not passed
58 examinations required for graduation after two attempts;

59 (8) emotional support services and resources for students at risk of dropping out; and

60 (9) recommendations for mechanisms to emphasize the importance of high school
61 graduation for all students.

62 SECTION 4. Effective Date. Sections 1 to 3 of this Act shall become operative on
63 August 1, 2023.