

HOUSE No.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PRESENTED BY:

Natalie M. Blais, (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 relative to multiple relationships in approved private special education schools.

PETITION OF:

NAME:	DISTRICT/ADDRESS:	DATE ADDED:
Benjamin Tobin	51 South St Williamsburg MA 01096	2/15/2022

HOUSE No.

By Ms. Blais of Sunderland (by request), a petition (subject to Joint Rule 12) of Benjamin Tobin relative to multiple relationships in approved private special education schools. Education.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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

An Act relative to multiple relationships in approved private special education schools.

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

- 1 Instructors who work in the approved private special education schools established under
- 2 chapter 71B work with a highly vulnerable population of students. Students who are placed in
- 3 these programs have usually struggled in the public school system for many years, and families
- 4 typically have to reach a settlement with a school district to gain a placement in one of these
- 5 taxpayer funded private programs. Students are meant to gain the skills they need to be able to
- 6 thrive in the general education setting. Currently, there is no oversight of the ethics and teacher
- 7 preparedness in out of district placements. There is very little oversight in general. As such, there
- 8 are a high number of incidents related to poor boundaries between students and staff. These
- 9 multiple relationships have the potential to cause damage to both students and staff. The balance
- 10 of power in student/teacher relationships is also much more unevenly balanced in a special
- 11 education setting, so the primary objective of this legislation is to protect students.

- 12 Definition of Multiple Relationships:

13 Multiple relationships occur when the educator is in a professional role with one or more
14 members of the school community and also has a personal relationship with that person or a
15 member of that person's family. Multiple relationships have the potential to impair objectivity,
16 competence, or effectiveness in performing his or her functions as an educator

17 - National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification

18 Requirements:

19 1. Educators must consider the risks that multiple relationships could impair
20 objectivity and increase the likelihood of harm to students' learning and well-being or diminish
21 educator effectiveness;

22 2. Considering the risks and benefits of a professional relationship with someone
23 with whom the educator has had a past personal relationship and vice versa;

24 3. Considering the implications and possible ramifications of engaging in a personal
25 or professional relationship with parents and guardians, student teachers, colleagues, and
26 supervisors;

27 4. and Ensuring that professional responsibilities to paraprofessionals, student
28 teachers or interns do not interfere with responsibilities to students, their learning, and well-
29 being.

30 5. Educators must disclose any and all multiple relationships to the administrator of
31 the school. The administrator must then report the multiple relationship to the sending district
32 and to the department of education.

33 6. Administrators must report any and all multiple relationships to the school
34 community, the sending district, and the department of education.

35 Consequences:

36 1. Any educator who is found to be in a multiple relationship must undergo training
37 and professional development.

38 2. Based on the extent of the relationship, and the potential harm to the student, the
39 commissioner must immediately revoke the licensee's licensure.

40 3. The department of education must immediately open an investigation into the
41 licensee and the multiple relationship.

42 4. If it is found that there are multiple relationships, and unreported multiple
43 relationships, occurring in any school, the school will immediately be put on probation and be
44 unable to collect tuition from sending districts if the staff or administrator continue to work at the
45 school.

46 Professional Development:

47 Professional Development in approved private special education schools cannot be
48 internally driven. Outside professionals must be brought into the school to provide training and
49 guidance for staff and administrators in the school. The department of education will design a
50 five week long professional development course around the ethics of special education and the
51 harmful nature of multiple relationships. This training will be mandatory for all out of district
52 staff.