

**SENATE . . . . . No. 1303**

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**The Commonwealth of Massachusetts**

PRESENTED BY:

***Joan B. Lovely***

*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 establishing a model school policy on suicide prevention.

PETITION OF:

NAME:	DISTRICT/ADDRESS:	
<i>Joan B. Lovely</i>	<i>Second Essex</i>	
<i>Michael O. Moore</i>	<i>Second Worcester</i>	<i>3/8/2021</i>
<i>Elizabeth A. Malia</i>	<i>11th Suffolk</i>	<i>3/15/2021</i>
<i>Sal N. DiDomenico</i>	<i>Middlesex and Suffolk</i>	<i>3/23/2021</i>
<i>Susan L. Moran</i>	<i>Plymouth and Barnstable</i>	<i>4/3/2021</i>
<i>Danillo A. Sena</i>	<i>37th Middlesex</i>	<i>1/31/2022</i>

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By Ms. Lovely, a petition (accompanied by bill, Senate, No. 1303) of Joan B. Lovely, Michael O. Moore, Elizabeth A. Malia, Sal N. DiDomenico and others for legislation to establish a model school policy on suicide prevention. Mental Health, Substance Use and Recovery.

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**The Commonwealth of Massachusetts**

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**In the One Hundred and Ninety-Second General Court  
(2021-2022)**  
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An Act relative to establishing a model school policy on suicide prevention.

*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 95 of chapter 71 of the General Laws, as appearing in the 2018  
2 Official Edition, is hereby amended by inserting after subsection (d) the following new  
3 subsections:-

4           (e) The department, subject to appropriation, shall adopt rules to require that all public  
5 school districts and commonwealth charter schools serving students in grades 7 to 12, inclusive,  
6 adopt a policy on student suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention for said students. The  
7 policy shall be developed in consultation with school and community stakeholders, school-  
8 employed mental health professionals and suicide prevention experts. Elements of this policy  
9 shall include, but not be limited to (1) increasing awareness of the relationship between suicide  
10 and suicide risk factors including, but not limited to: (a) mental health and substance use  
11 conditions; (b) childhood abuse, neglect or trauma; (c) stress factors, including, but not limited  
12 to, bullying, harassment or relationship problems; (d) stressful life events, including, but not

13 limited to, rejection, breakup or loss of a relationship; (e) exposure to another person’s suicide or  
14 sensationalized or graphic accounts of suicide; and (f) previous suicide attempts, a family history  
15 of suicide or a family history of attempted suicide; (2) identifying training opportunities in  
16 recognizing suicide risk and referral procedures that may be available for school employees; (3)  
17 using the expertise of school employees who have been trained in recognizing suicide risk and  
18 referral procedures; (4) training school employees on how to respond to suspicion, concerns or  
19 warning signs of suicide; (5) training school employees on how to respond to a crisis situation  
20 where a student is in imminent danger to himself or herself; (6) establishing policies and  
21 protocols for communication with parents, including specifying what to do should parental  
22 notification not be in the best interest of the student; (7) counseling services within the school for  
23 students and their families related to suicide prevention; (8) making information concerning  
24 crisis intervention, suicide prevention and mental health services in the community for students  
25 and their families and school employees available; (9) identifying and developing partnerships  
26 with community organizations and agencies for referring students to health, mental health,  
27 substance use and social support services, including developing at least one memorandum of  
28 understanding between the local education agency and such an entity in the community or region  
29 of the public school district or commonwealth charter school; and (10) developing a plan to  
30 assist survivors of attempted suicide, and to assist students and school employees in coping with  
31 an attempted suicide or a suicide within the school community.

32 (f) The policy shall specifically address the needs of high-risk groups, including, but not  
33 limited to, one or more students: (1) bereaved by suicide; (2) with disabilities or with chronic  
34 health conditions, including mental health and substance use conditions; (3) experiencing

35 homelessness or in out-of-home settings, such as foster care; and (4) identifying as lesbian, gay,  
36 bisexual, transgender or questioning.

37 (g) The policy shall ensure that a school employee acts only within the authorization and  
38 scope of the employee's credential or license. Nothing in this section shall be construed as  
39 authorizing or encouraging a school employee to diagnose or treat mental health conditions  
40 unless the employee is specifically licensed and employed to do so.

41 (h) No cause of action may be brought for any loss or damage caused by any act or  
42 omission resulting from the implementation of the provisions of this section, or resulting from  
43 any training, or lack of training, required by this section. Nothing in this section shall be  
44 construed to impose any specific duty of care.

45 (i) To assist local educational agencies in developing policies for student suicide  
46 prevention, the department shall develop and maintain a model policy in accordance with this  
47 section to serve as a guide for local educational agencies. The model policy shall be posted by  
48 the department on its website along with relevant resources and information to support schools in  
49 developing and implementing said policy.

50 (j) The governing board or body of each public school district and commonwealth charter  
51 school serving students in grades 7 to 12 shall review, at least every fifth year, its policy on  
52 student suicide prevention and, if necessary, update its policy.