

SENATE No. 2814

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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

SENATE, April 7, 2022.

The committee on Higher Education, to whom was referred the petitions (accompanied by bill, Senate, No. 839) of John F. Keenan for legislation to establish a behavioral health workforce center; and (accompanied by bill, House, No. 1346) of Kay Khan for legislation to establish a behavioral health workforce center of excellence at a state or community college, report the accompanying bill (Senate, No. 2814).

For the committee,
Anne M. Gobi

SENATE No. 2814

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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

An Act establishing a behavioral health workforce center.

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. Chapter 15A of the General Laws, as appearing in the 2018 Official
2 Edition, is hereby amended by adding after Section 45, the following section:

3 SECTION 46. There shall be a Behavioral Health Workforce Center of Excellence,
4 herein the Center. The purpose of the Center shall be to gather data and research to advise policy
5 leaders on how to address the crisis in the behavioral health workforce across the
6 commonwealth. In consultation with the state universities, the commissioner shall establish the
7 center at one of the state universities in commonwealth.

8 The Center shall:

9 (a) Engage a diverse, cross discipline group of stakeholders to address the needs of
10 the behavioral health field by studying the current landscape, mapping or building clear career
11 ladders, and identifying and addressing training needs.

12 (b) Annually inventory the professional licenses and certifications available for those
13 who work in the mental health and addiction treatment field, including, but not limited to, the
14 number of licensed and certified individuals in the state, the academic and supervisory
15 requirements to achieve each certification, the scope of practice of each license, the academic
16 programs available in the state and cost of these programs.

17 (c) Annually create demographic profiles of the current field of practitioners.

18 (d) Annually inventory the number of professional and paraprofessional practitioners
19 delivering direct clinical or recovery services, including practitioner acceptance of insurance.

20 (e) Work with the advisory committee established herein to annually inventory the
21 workforce needs in the behavioral health system to establish the gaps that exist by professional
22 license and certificate, and practice settings.

23 (f) Inventory the number of individuals with professional licenses or certifications
24 who no longer practice behavioral health in third-party reimbursable settings.

25 (g) Examine any regulatory changes recommended by licensing and registration
26 entities at the Division of Professional Licensure, and the Department of Public Health, and offer
27 public written assessments to these entities during the regulatory process that includes the effect
28 of these requirements on the existing workforce and the future workforce pipeline.

29 (h) Examine existing training funds across state and federal agencies, including but
30 not limited to, the Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development, the Commonwealth
31 Corporation, the Executive Office of Education, the Executive Office of Health and Human

32 Services and its constituent agencies, and make recommendations on ways to leverage funding
33 and resources to focus on existing and needed training programs for the field.

34 (i) Work with existing education and training programs on curriculum improvements
35 focused on best practices in the current behavioral health landscape and coordinate these needs
36 with state purchasing agencies to better align educational institutional institutions with the needs
37 in the field.

38 (j) Examine existing loan forgiveness opportunities for practitioners and make
39 recommendations on ways to expand current initiatives.

40 (k) Establish an advisory committee, to be cochaired by a person appointed by the
41 Department of Higher Education and a person appointed by the Association for Behavioral
42 Healthcare, and members selected by the commissioner, including, but not limited to,
43 representation from each of the following entities: the Executive Office of Health and Human
44 Services, the Department of Public Health, the Department of Mental Health, the Blue Cross and
45 Blue Shield of Massachusetts, the Massachusetts Association of Health Plans, the Executive
46 Office of Labor and Workforce Development, NAMI Massachusetts, the Massachusetts
47 Organization for Addiction Recovery, the Parent Professional Advocacy League, the
48 Massachusetts Association for Behavioral Health Systems, the National Association of Social
49 Workers-Massachusetts, the Massachusetts Psychological Association, the Massachusetts Mental
50 Health Counselors Association, and the Massachusetts for Mental Health. The advisory
51 committee shall meet regularly and discuss the state of the behavioral workforce in
52 Massachusetts.

53 (1) Create and fund a technical assistance center that funds special projects and
54 assistance for value-based purchasing and care preparation and behavioral health and primary
55 care integration.

56 (m) Examine other matters deemed appropriate by the Center.

57