

# HOUSE . . . . . No. 4576

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## The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, April 29, 2024.

The committee on Education, to whom were referred the petition (accompanied by bill, House, No. 432) of Ruth B. Balsler, Vanna Howard and Sal N. DiDomenico for legislation to encourage strategies to develop school students' social-emotional learning competencies, the petition (accompanied by bill, House, No. 452) of Marjorie C. Decker, Mindy Domb and Lindsay N. Sabadosa relative to recess for elementary school children, the petition (accompanied by bill, House, No. 465) of Carol A. Doherty, Ryan M. Hamilton and others relative to establishing comprehensive school counseling programs, the petition (accompanied by bill, House, No. 467) of Carol A. Doherty and others relative to expanding reasons for excused absences from school to include mental or behavioral health, the petition (accompanied by resolve, House, No. 486) of Carmine Lawrence Gentile and others for an investigation by a task force relative to the effect of school day start times for middle and secondary school students, the petition (accompanied by resolve, House, No. 493) of Patricia A. Haddad, Alan Silvia and Michelle M. DuBois for an investigation by a special commission (including members of the General Court) relative to child suicide, the petition (accompanied by bill, House, No. 497) of Natalie M. Higgins, Meghan Kilcoyne and others relative to the promotion of mental health education in public schools, the petition (accompanied by bill, House, No. 516) of Kay Khan and others relative to the implementation of social and emotional learning curricula in middle and high school athletic programs, the petition (accompanied by bill, House, No. 537) of Frank A. Moran, Natalie M. Higgins and others relative to safety and violence education for students, the petition (accompanied by bill, House, No. 555) of Edward R. Philips and Sally P. Kerans that the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education be authorized to offer two hours of evidence based in-service suicide awareness and prevention training once every other year to certain employees, the petition (accompanied by bill, House, No. 557) of Smitty Pignatelli and others relative to prescription opioid abuse prevention

education in public schools, the petition (accompanied by bill, House, No. 560) of David M. Rogers and others relative to media literacy in schools, the petition (accompanied by bill, House, No. 575) of Danillo A. Sena and others for legislation to strengthen suicide prevention in schools, the petition (accompanied by bill, House, No. 593) of Chynah Tyler relative to social and emotional learning, the petition (accompanied by bill, House, No. 3573) of Marcus S. Vaughn and others relative to establishing a grant program to increase the presence of mental health counselors in schools, the petition (accompanied by bill, House, No. 3754) of Danielle W. Gregoire relative to school bullying, and the joint petition (accompanied by bill, House, No. 3853) of Shirley B. Arriaga and Pavel M. Payano for legislation to establish an anti-bullying officer pilot program to assist schools experiencing significant bullying incidents, reports recommending that the accompanying bill (House, No. 4576) ought to pass.

For the committee,

DENISE C. GARLICK.

**HOUSE . . . . . No. 4576**

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**The Commonwealth of Massachusetts**

**In the One Hundred and Ninety-Third General Court  
(2023-2024)**

An Act to promote social emotional learning and the mental and behavioral health of students.

*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. (a) There shall be a task force established to study and provide  
2       recommendations on a statewide birth through higher education framework for social emotional  
3       learning and mental and behavioral health.

4           The task force shall consist of 23 members: 1 of whom shall be the secretary of education  
5       or a designee who shall serve as co-chair; 1 of whom shall be the secretary of health and human  
6       services or a designee who shall serve as co-chair; 2 of whom shall be the chairs of the joint  
7       committee on education or their designees; 2 of whom shall be the chairs of the joint committee  
8       on higher education or their designees, 1 of whom shall be a member of the safe and supportive  
9       schools commission appointed by the safe and supportive schools commission; 1 of whom shall  
10       be a school superintendent appointed by the Massachusetts Association of School  
11       Superintendents; 1 of whom shall be a school psychologist appointed by the Massachusetts  
12       School Psychologists Association; 1 of whom shall be a school adjustment counselor or guidance  
13       counselor appointed by the Massachusetts School Counselors Association; 1 of whom shall be a  
14       member of the American College Counseling Association appointed by the American College

15 Counseling Association; 1 of whom shall be an advocate with experience in education,  
16 behavioral health, and the impact of trauma on learning appointed by Massachusetts Advocates  
17 for Children; 1 of whom shall be appointed by the Massachusetts League of Community Health  
18 Centers; 1 of whom shall be appointed by the Massachusetts Coalition for Suicide Prevention; 1  
19 of whom shall be appointed by Strategies for Children; 1 of whom shall be a school nurse  
20 appointed by the Massachusetts School Nurse Organization, Inc.; 1 of whom shall be appointed  
21 by the Massachusetts Center on Child Wellbeing & Trauma; 1 of whom shall be a social worker  
22 appointed by the Massachusetts Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers; 1 of  
23 whom shall be a appointed by the Children’s Mental Health Campaign; 1 of whom shall be  
24 appointed by the Behavioral Health Integrated Resources for Children Project Advisory Council;  
25 1 of whom shall be a parent of a current student appointed by the Parent/Professional Advocacy  
26 League; 1 of whom shall be a student member of the state student advisory council appointed by  
27 the state student advisory council; and 1 of whom shall be appointed by the Federation for  
28 Children with Special Needs.

29           The task force shall study and provide recommendations on the following: (i) the  
30 development of a framework for integrating equitable, accessible, and culturally and  
31 linguistically sustaining social emotional learning in educational settings from birth through  
32 higher education into curriculum; (ii) guiding principles and strategies related to providing social  
33 emotional supports for students in schools; (iii) implementing targeted and evidenced-based  
34 supports for students to meet social and behavioral expectations aligned with social emotional  
35 learning competencies; (iv) developing and promoting professional development for school and  
36 district staff to recognize and respond to mental and behavioral health challenges that may arise  
37 during in-person learning; (v) implementing strategies related to youth suicide prevention; (vi)

38 identifying and developing partnerships between school districts and charter schools and  
39 agencies and community organizations for referring students who require additional support to  
40 health, behavioral health, substance use, and social support services; and (vii) how online  
41 advertising and social media affect students' short- and long-term physical, emotional, and  
42 cognitive development.

43 (b) The task force shall convene beginning not later than 90 days after the effective date  
44 of this act and meet not fewer than 4 times within the first year prior to submitting its findings  
45 and recommendations; provided, that after the first year, the commission shall meet at a  
46 frequency determined by the co-chairs of the commission until the submission of the findings  
47 and recommendations or two years from the initial convening, whichever comes first. The task  
48 force shall submit its findings and recommendations, including development of shared language,  
49 identification of best practices, and mechanisms to monitor progress, to the executive office of  
50 education, the executive office of health and human services, the clerks of the house of  
51 representatives and the senate, the joint committee on mental health, substance use and recovery,  
52 and the joint committee on education not later than 2 years after the effective date of this act.

53 SECTION 2. Notwithstanding any general or special law to the contrary, not later than  
54 December 1, 2026, the department of elementary and secondary education shall, in collaboration  
55 with the executive office of health and human services, the department of mental health, and in  
56 consultation with the task force established to study a statewide birth through higher education  
57 framework for social emotional learning and mental and behavioral health, experts in childhood  
58 mental health, and educators from public elementary and secondary schools, develop and publish  
59 guidance for supporting the social emotional development and mental health of students in  
60 kindergarten through twelfth grade. The guidance shall include, but not be limited to, the

61 following: (i) guiding principles and strategies related to student social and emotional health and  
62 wellbeing; (ii) integrating equitable, accessible, and culturally and linguistically sustaining social  
63 emotional learning skills into student learning experiences; (iii) strategies related to suicide  
64 prevention; (iv) strategies to develop students' social emotional learning competencies, including  
65 self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-  
66 making; and (v) how online advertising and social media affect students' short- and long-term  
67 physical, emotional, and cognitive development. The guidance shall be able to be integrated into  
68 the general academic curricula, including the promotion of mental and behavioral health during  
69 school time and in extracurricular activities.

70 A school district shall consider the guidance if it elects to integrate social  
71 emotional learning and mental and behavioral health into academic curricula.

72 SECTION 3. Section 1P of chapter 69 of the General Laws, as appearing in the 2022  
73 Official Edition, is hereby amended by inserting after the phrase, "inclusion of students with  
74 disabilities," in lines 11-12, the following words: - "the influence of technology on the short- and  
75 long-term physical, emotional, and cognitive development of students."

76 SECTION 4. Subsection (g) of section 1P of chapter 69 of General Laws, as appearing in  
77 the 2022 Official Edition, is hereby amended by striking out, in lines 128-132, the words, "1 of  
78 whom shall be a former member of the behavioral health and public schools task force who  
79 participated in the development and statewide evaluation of the self-assessment tool; 1 of whom  
80 shall be a former member of the behavioral health and public schools task force with experience  
81 implementing the framework;" and inserting in place the following words:- "1 of whom shall

82 have experience in implementing the self-assessment tool; 1 of whom shall have experience  
83 implementing the framework.”

84 SECTION 5. Subsection (b) of section 37Q of chapter 71 of the General Laws is hereby  
85 amended by inserting after the first sentence the following sentence: -

86 Each plan shall include, to the extent possible, a policy to identify and develop  
87 partnerships with community organizations and local and regional boards of public health to  
88 refer students to health, behavioral health, substance use, and social support services.

89 SECTION 6. Section 38G of chapter 71 of the General Laws is hereby amended by  
90 inserting after the word “styles,” in line 251, the following words: - “strategies to develop  
91 students’ social emotional learning competencies, including self-awareness, self-management,  
92 social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making,”

93 SECTION 7. Section 38G of chapter 71 of the General Laws is hereby amended by  
94 inserting after the word “styles,” in line 287, the following words: - “strategies to develop  
95 students’ social emotional learning competencies, including self-awareness, self-management,  
96 social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making,”