

HOUSE No. 600

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PRESENTED BY:

Andres X. Vargas and Manny Cruz

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 fulfilling the promise of education reform.

PETITION OF:

NAME:	DISTRICT/ADDRESS:	DATE ADDED:
<i>Andres X. Vargas</i>	<i>3rd Essex</i>	<i>1/19/2023</i>
<i>Manny Cruz</i>	<i>7th Essex</i>	<i>1/19/2023</i>
<i>Sal N. DiDomenico</i>	<i>Middlesex and Suffolk</i>	<i>1/26/2023</i>
<i>James K. Hawkins</i>	<i>2nd Bristol</i>	<i>1/30/2023</i>
<i>Kristin E. Kassner</i>	<i>2nd Essex</i>	<i>5/16/2024</i>

HOUSE No. 600

By Representatives Vargas of Haverhill and Cruz of Salem, a petition (accompanied by bill, House, No. 600) of Andres X. Vargas, Manny Cruz and others for legislation to establish a special commission (including members of the General Court) to be known as the promise commission to conduct an ongoing study of all matters concerning education in the 21st century. Education.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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

An Act fulfilling the promise of education reform.

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). Whereas, seventeen years after adopting the Education Reform Act of
2 1993, the legislature acknowledged the need to reflect on the past, revisit the promise, and update
3 the law to more accurately align with research and trends of a new era. The 2010 Achievement
4 Gap Act embraced choice opportunities for families in low performing districts, expanded
5 flexibilities for school leaders and integrated the turnaround expertise of educational
6 management organizations; and

7 Whereas today, nearly thirty years after the original Act was signed, it is critical that
8 leaders reconvene to review the current status and future needs of public education in the
9 Commonwealth. The question ‘where do we want public education to be in five and ten years
10 from today?’ must guide the work of these leaders and the answers require a comprehensive
11 examination of issues that were hardly at the forefront of the 1993 agenda. A prescient 2014

12 DESE report titled “Building on 20 Years of Massachusetts Education Reform” framed the
13 obligation well: “As we begin our third decade under standards-based education, the
14 Commonwealth is engaged in the next generation of challenges, no less daunting than the first”;
15 and

16 Whereas, the Pandemic gave rise to ‘the Great Resignation’ in all sectors of the
17 workforce. The teaching profession has not been immune. While it is difficult to track real-time
18 turnover numbers, it is evident that a confluence of low morale, insufficient pay, longer hours, a
19 lack of respect and more robust opportunities elsewhere has created a perfect storm in the
20 profession. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, “44 percent of public
21 schools reported teaching vacancies at the start of the 2022-2023 school year, with more than
22 half due to resignations”; and

23 Whereas the work ahead must be laser focused on the workforce pipeline, and
24 specifically, recruitment, retainment and support. In 2023, inclusion, diversity and equity are
25 terms that apply equally as much to the student population as they do to those who teach
26 students. Attracting underrepresented populations, including but not limited to those with
27 disabilities, people of color and first-generation learners; and

28 Whereas growing the educator pipeline and retaining teachers requires classroom
29 supports for them. Providing a pathway for professional development, expanding leadership
30 preparation programs, supporting differentiated learning options and offering wraparound
31 services to ensure teachers have healthy outlets to manage anxiety and stress are the building
32 blocks of a happy and successful workforce; and

33 Whereas providing expanded resources to rapidly grow educator preparation programs is
34 imperative to meet the dwindling numbers of teachers in the field. Developing and supporting
35 school leaders coupled with efforts to expand and strengthen supports for classroom teachers
36 including programs for mid-career professionals and opportunities for teacher coaches; and

37 Whereas an expanded definition of student wraparound services requires a significant
38 investment of funding and a universal recognition that they are a vital resource to bolster the
39 resiliency of students, families and caretakers; and

40 Whereas standards-based education in the 21st Century has evolved over the last three
41 decades and today requires empathy, cultural competence, implicit bias awareness and a
42 commitment to ensuring that all school communities embrace and strengthen each students'
43 sense of identity.

44 Therefore, in order to fulfill the promise of education reform, a special commission,
45 hereafter referred to as The Promise Commission, to revisit the promise, review the past and
46 redefine the direction is required.

47 (b) The Promise Commission shall consist of eleven (11) members appointed as follows:
48 The speaker of the house or designee, the president of the senate or designee, the commissioner
49 of education, the commissioner of early childhood, the commissioner of higher education, a
50 member appointed by the Massachusetts association of school superintendents, a member
51 appointed by the Massachusetts association of school committees, a member appointed by the
52 Massachusetts affiliate of the American federation of teachers, a member appointed by the
53 Massachusetts teachers association, a member appointed by the Massachusetts education equity
54 partnership, and a Massachusetts based member appointed by Latinos for education.

55 The Promise Commission shall conduct an ongoing study of all matters concerning
56 education in the 21stCentury, including a strong emphasis on those outlined in Section (a); and
57 further, shall be guided by five key elements of empathy: (1) understanding others, (2)
58 developing others, (3) having a service orientation, (4) leveraging diversity and (5) political
59 awareness.

60 The Promise Commission shall have two chairs elected by the members. The chairs may
61 create issue oriented working groups as they deem necessary.

62 The Promise Commission shall meet not less than once per month and shall serve without
63 compensation.

64 The Promise Commission shall develop a comprehensive report containing specific
65 legislative policy and regulatory recommendations; and further, shall submit its report and
66 recommendations to the legislature and governor on or before March 31, 2024.