

HOUSE No. 4407

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, August 28, 2025.

The committee on Higher Education, to whom were referred the petition (accompanied by bill, House, No. 1430) of Paul K. Frost relative to college credits for AP courses; the petition (accompanied by bill, House, No. 1432) of Judith A. Garcia relative to advanced placement examinations and college credit; the petition (accompanied by bill, House, No. 1435) of Richard M. Haggerty relative to advanced placement examination for post-secondary level course credits; the petition (accompanied by bill, House, No. 1441) of Bradley H. Jones, Jr., and others relative to the acceptance of Advanced Placement scores for college credit; and the petition (accompanied by bill, House, No. 1455) of Jeffrey N. Roy, Kate Lipper-Garabedian and Manny Cruz relative high schools providing and funding college programs, reports recommending that the accompanying bill (House, No. 4407) ought to pass.

For the committee,

DAVID M. ROGERS.

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**In the One Hundred and Ninety-Fourth General Court
(2025-2026)**

An Act relative to college in high school.

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 is hereby amended by inserting after
2 section 39 the following section: -

3 Section 39A. (a) All public institutions of higher education shall develop and adopt
4 written policies and procedures for accepting for the purposes of course credit to satisfy degree
5 requirements scores of all Advanced Placement examinations, successful completion of early
6 college courses, successful completion of the International Baccalaureate Diploma Program,
7 successful completion of dual enrollment courses, and successful completion of cooperative
8 education programs. In its policy, each public institution of higher education shall:

9 (i) establish conditions for granting course credit, including the minimum required scores
10 on advanced placement examinations and examinations for courses constituting the International
11 Baccalaureate Diploma Program;

12 (ii) establish whether credit will be granted for general education, major or elective
13 requirements at the public institution of higher education; and

14 (iii) include procedures related to the transferability of these credits to another institution
15 of higher education consistent with the goals or recommendations of the MassTransfer program
16 established under section 48.

17 (b) Upon request of an admitted student, a public institution of higher education, based on
18 information provided by the applicant, shall determine and notify the admitted student regarding:

19 (i) the amount and type of any course credit that would be granted to the admitted student
20 under the policy adopted pursuant to subsection (a); and

21 (ii) any other academic requirement that the admitted student would satisfy under the
22 policy.

23 (c) All policies and procedures governing the award of course credit shall be posted on
24 the public institution of higher education's website in a standardized format to be determined by
25 the department, which the public institution of higher education shall update as necessary to
26 reflect any changes in policies and procedures. Each public institution of higher education shall
27 submit its policies and procedures, or any changes thereto, to the department which shall post
28 each public institution of higher education's policies and procedures on the department's
29 website.

30 (d) The department, in cooperation with the board of trustees of each public institution of
31 higher education, including the University of Massachusetts, shall, at least once every 3 years or
32 more often as it deems necessary, review the credit-granting policies of each public institution of
33 higher education established in accordance with the requirements of this section and shall file a
34 report with its findings and any recommendations with the clerks of the house of representatives
35 and the senate and chairs of the joint committee on higher education.. Each public institution of

36 higher education shall provide the board of higher education with all necessary data, in
37 accordance with the federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974, 20 U.S.C.
38 1232g, to conduct the analysis.

39 SECTION 2. Chapter 69 of the General Laws is hereby amended by adding the
40 following section: -

41 Section 40. (a) As used in this chapter, the following words shall have the following
42 meanings, unless the context clearly requires otherwise:

43 “Early college”, a statewide high school initiative established through formal
44 partnerships between Massachusetts public school districts and any accredited public, private, or
45 municipal institution of higher education located in the commonwealth, for the purpose of
46 providing structured opportunities for students, particularly those that are underrepresented in
47 higher education, to earn college credit that is transferable and applicable toward a postsecondary
48 degree or credential while continuing to meet high school graduation requirements.

49 “Designated early college program”, an early college partnership between a public
50 high school and an accredited public, private, or municipal institution of higher education
51 officially sanctioned and approved by the state.

52 (b) There shall be an early college joint committee, hereinafter referred to in this
53 section as the ECJC, which shall be responsible for: (i) monitoring and overseeing
54 implementation of early college, (ii) approving statewide goals and standards for early college
55 recommended by the office, and (iii) giving final approval to applicants for designation. The
56 ECJC shall develop recommendations that include, but are not limited to, (1) how to advance the
57 commonwealth’s goals related to the sustainability, growth, and accessibility of early college

58 programming; (2) to assist the office in establishing and monitoring statewide performance
59 requirements and enrollments; (3) to foster collaboration between the department of higher
60 education and the department of elementary and secondary education on the early college
61 initiative; (4) to advance the alignment of early college programming with statewide and regional
62 workforce development goals, and (5) to promote meaningful stakeholder engagement between
63 institutions of higher education and public school districts. The ECJC shall consist of: the chair
64 of the board of higher education; the chair of the board of elementary and secondary education;
65 one member of the board of higher education, to be appointed by the chair; one member of the
66 board of elementary and secondary education, to be appointed by the chair; and the secretary of
67 education. The commissioner of elementary and secondary education and the commissioner of
68 higher education, or their respective designees, shall serve as non-voting members of the ECJC.

69 (c) There shall be an office of early college, herein referred to in this section as the
70 office. The office shall be administered and managed jointly by the commissioner of the
71 department of elementary and secondary education and the commissioner of the department of
72 higher education. The commissioners shall enter into a memorandum of understanding, subject
73 to the approval of the secretary of education, that governs the administration, coordination, and
74 oversight of the office. The memorandum shall (i) define the respective roles and responsibilities
75 of each department; (ii) establish mechanisms for shared decision-making and accountability;
76 (iii) ensure, to the extent practicable, equitable participation by both departments in the
77 management and strategic direction of the office; and (iv) provide a process for the secretary of
78 education to resolve interagency matters that affect the coordination, oversight, or
79 implementation of early college programming. The memorandum shall be reviewed and updated
80 not less than 3 years, or more frequently as agreed upon by the commissioners. The departments

81 shall publish and maintain an updated description of the memorandum on their websites and
82 shall notify the chairs of the joint committee on education and the joint committee on higher
83 education 30 days in advance of any changes.

84 (d) The office shall: (i) oversee all early college programs; (ii) receive and review new
85 applications for early college designation; (iii) recommend any designations to be awarded to
86 applicants; (iv) provide logistical and technical support to applicants and designated early college
87 programs as needed; (v) track and report on the performance of early college participants in the
88 aggregate and disaggregate by student subgroup; (vi) evaluate the impact of early college on
89 postsecondary access, student success, and progress towards meeting statewide goals for early
90 college; (vii) and identify and pursue further innovative approaches.

91 All early college programs shall:

92 (1) help prepare students by providing equitable access to college coursework and
93 pathways that support successful transitioning to and completion of postsecondary education;

94 (2) encourage the cooperative or shared use of resources, personnel and facilities between
95 school districts, public and municipal colleges, independent colleges or universities, and
96 employers;

97 (3) emphasize involvement of parents or legal guardians and provide consistent
98 counseling, advising and conferencing with parents and legal guardians so that families and
99 students can make responsible decisions regarding course selection and may track the student's
100 academic progress and success;

101 (4) develop methods for early identification of potential participating students in the
102 middle grades and through high school and provide outreach to those students to promote
103 academic preparation and awareness of early college programs; and

104 (5) develop strategies to identify and engage currently underserved student populations in
105 higher education

106 (e) The office shall establish the standards and information it deems necessary to be
107 included in an application for designation as an official early college program and shall develop
108 a process to ensure that designated early college programs continue to meet said standards over
109 time. Such standards shall encourage, where appropriate, alignment between general education
110 courses and career-oriented courses and pathways.. In developing and applying such standards,
111 the office shall make reasonable allowance for regional differences, including the distinct
112 challenges and capacities of rural and urban school districts, to ensure equitable access to early
113 college opportunities across the Commonwealth.

114 (f) The office shall develop a streamlined designation application process which
115 shall, to the extent practicable, avoid any unnecessary or duplicative application requirements for
116 applicants who have, in a separate and previous application, been approved as a designated early
117 college program and who plan on utilizing proven and effective early college models and
118 pathways. In developing this process, the office shall consult with and solicit feedback from the
119 early college working group established in subsection (l) of this section and shall consider a
120 model whereby an institution of higher education need not be required to submit an application
121 for designation more than once.

122 (g) The office shall, from time to time, disseminate information and guidance on
123 statewide and regional labor market trends and conditions to designated early college programs
124 and applicants for designation in order to ensure early college pathways are attuned to statewide
125 and regional labor market needs. As needed, the office shall collaborate with the executive office
126 of labor and workforce development and other regional workforce intermediaries and agencies to
127 determine the extent to which early college pathways are aligned with regional and statewide
128 employment needs and shall update standards for designation accordingly.

129 (h) The office shall, in consultation with relevant stakeholders including but not limited
130 to the working group established in subsection (l) of this section, develop recommendations for
131 the creation and implementation of early college technical pathways, including but not limited to
132 pathways offered through vocational-technical schools and programs pursuant to Chapter 74.
133 Such recommendations shall address any technical, regulatory, or operational barriers to
134 participation and identify strategies to support the integration of high-quality career and technical
135 education into the early college framework and may include, without limitation,
136 recommendations for amending designation criteria or standards to encourage participation by
137 such programs. . Nothing in this section shall be construed to require the inclusion of Chapter 74
138 programs in early college.

139 (i) Annually, the office shall review the per-credit reimbursements received by public and
140 private institutions of higher education for their participation in a designated early college
141 program. Annually, not later than December 1st, the office shall submit recommendations on
142 reimbursement rates for the forthcoming school year to the house and senate committees on ways
143 and means, the joint committee on higher education, and the joint committee on education. In
144 formulating its recommendations, the office may consider several factors, including but not

145 limited to: (i) the site where the course is taught and the modality by which it is taught; (ii)
146 whether the course has extra costs associated with enrollment and (iii) whether there are
147 minimum numbers of participating students per section offered.

148 (j) The office shall propose, subject to approval by the ECJC, multi-year goals for the
149 commonwealth for the attainment of college degrees and other post-secondary credentials for
150 students participating in early college programs. Such goals shall include recommended
151 statewide targets and goals as well as goals for increasing support for historically underserved
152 student populations in higher education. The office shall be responsible for ensuring annual,
153 timely public reporting of progress statewide and by districts and schools towards those goals.

154 (k) Annually, and no later than September 30th, the office shall submit detailed reports on
155 all current and projected expenditures and fiscal operations related to early college to the ECJC.
156 The ECJC may review and comment on the fiscal operations of the office and may issue formal
157 recommendations to the office.

158 (l) The ECJC shall convene a working group for the purpose of advising the office
159 and the ECJC on matters related to the development, implementation, and expansion of early
160 college programs in the commonwealth. The working group shall meet no fewer than 4 times
161 annually and include, but not be limited to, representatives from organizations, associations, and
162 entities that are directly affected by or have a demonstrated interest in early college programs,
163 including those representing students and families, secondary and post-secondary educational
164 institutions, early college advocacy groups, state government, and workforce and community
165 stakeholders. The secretary of education shall determine the scope, structure, and procedures of

166 the working group and shall regularly solicit input and recommendations from its members to
167 inform policymaking and strategic planning.

168 (l) Where required, each designated early college program shall enter into an agreement
169 with at least 1 postsecondary institution that provides students with opportunities to receive
170 postsecondary credits during the student's participation in the program. The agreement shall
171 establish each party's commitments and duties in administering the designated early college
172 program, including but not limited to program coordination, student support, faculty support,
173 career partnership coordinating, and performance monitoring. Partner high schools and colleges
174 shall make best efforts to ensure that, consistent with goals and recommendations developed by
175 the MassTransfer program established in section 48 of chapter 15A, college credits automatically
176 transfer to Massachusetts public institutions of higher education upon completion of the program
177 and admittance to one of those public institutions. In addition, partnering high schools and
178 colleges may consider automatic admission to the participating college upon successful
179 completion of the college in high school program.

180 (m) All early college programs shall be open to all enrolled students, on a space
181 available basis. If the number of applicants exceeds the number of available seats in an early
182 college program, the designated early college program shall conduct a lottery to determine
183 admission. The lottery shall be conducted in a neutral and unbiased manner and shall not have
184 the purpose or effect of discriminating against any student or group of students on the basis of
185 race, color, national origin, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, disability, or any
186 other protected characteristic under state or federal law. Nothing in this subsection shall be
187 construed to prevent a school or school district from instituting reasonable prerequisite

188 conditions for students seeking admission to a specialized or advanced course or program,
189 provided that such conditions are designed to ensure student success in said courses or programs.

190 (n) Annually, by December 31, each designated early college program shall file a
191 report with the office of early college, on performance measures, including, but not limited to the
192 following categories:

193 (i) high school graduation rates of participating students;

194 (ii) percentage of participating students who complete the program;

195 (iii) percentage of participating students who gain any postsecondary credits;

196 (iv) credits earned by participating students in college in high school programs, including
197 percentage of each program incorporating early college to gain at least 12 credits;

198 (v) percentage of participating students who immediately enroll in postsecondary
199 education;

200 (vi) percentage of participating students who persist to a second year in postsecondary
201 education.

202 (vii) percentage of participating students in a 6-year cohort who attain postsecondary
203 degrees; and

204 (viii) college and career outcomes of participating students.

205 Annually, not later than July 1st, the commissioners shall prepare an aggregate report for
206 the senate and house chairs of the joint committee on higher education, and the joint committee
207 on education and shall establish and maintain a publicly accessible display of the overall success

208 of early college programs, which shall include but not be limited to the publication of the above
209 performance indicators and other relevant data.

210 SECTION 3: Chapter 69 of the General Laws, as appearing in the 2022 Official
211 Edition, is hereby amended by adding the following section:

212 Section 41.

213 (a) Pursuant to regulations to be promulgated by the board of elementary and
214 secondary education, as needed to implement this section, all public high schools shall offer an
215 program to students before the completion of their 12th grade year that incorporates at least one
216 of the following: (1) early college; (2) dual enrollment; (3) industry-recognized credentialing in
217 high school; (4) advanced placement courses; (5) international baccalaureate programs; (6)
218 cooperative education programs, or (7) other approaches for college and career programs. A
219 school district may apply to the commissioner for a waiver from the requirements of this section,
220 and the commissioner may grant such a waiver for a period not to exceed three years, provided
221 the district demonstrates substantial hardship, including but not limited to significant fiscal or
222 geographic barriers, and submits a written plan outlining the steps it will take to come into
223 compliance with the requirements of this section. Upon expiration, waivers may be renewed at
224 the discretion of the commissioner.

225 (b) The board of elementary and secondary education shall promulgate regulations
226 to implement this section.

227 SECTION 4. The commissioner of the department of elementary and secondary
228 education may authorize the use of funds from the Twenty-First Century Education Trust Fund
229 established in section 35NNN of chapter 10 for early college programs. Such use shall be

230 consistent with the purposes of the trust, including addressing persistent disparities in
231 achievement, improving educational opportunities, and supporting relevant cross-agency and
232 district-level efficiencies.

233 SECTION 6. The commissioner of the elementary and secondary education and the
234 commissioner of higher education shall enter into a memorandum of understanding governing
235 the administration, coordination, and oversight of the office of early college pursuant to
236 subsection (b) of section 40 of chapter 69 of the General Laws within 90 days after the effective
237 date of this act.

238 SECTION 7. The office shall submit its recommendations pursuant to subsection (g)
239 of section 40 of chapter 69 of the General Laws, inserted by section 2, to the early college board,
240 established in subsection (a) of said section 40 of said chapter 69, not later than 1 year after the
241 effective date of this act.

242 SECTION 8. Section 100 of chapter 71 of the General Laws shall take effect on
243 September 1, 2028.