

HOUSE No. 544

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PRESENTED BY:

Marjorie C. Decker

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 to establish the Whole Child Grant Program.

PETITION OF:

NAME:	DISTRICT/ADDRESS:	DATE ADDED:
<i>Marjorie C. Decker</i>	<i>25th Middlesex</i>	<i>1/15/2025</i>
<i>Lindsay N. Sabadosa</i>	<i>1st Hampshire</i>	<i>1/27/2025</i>
<i>Vanna Howard</i>	<i>17th Middlesex</i>	<i>1/30/2025</i>
<i>Michael D. Brady</i>	<i>Second Plymouth and Norfolk</i>	<i>1/30/2025</i>
<i>Christopher Richard Flanagan</i>	<i>1st Barnstable</i>	<i>1/30/2025</i>
<i>Danillo A. Sena</i>	<i>37th Middlesex</i>	<i>1/31/2025</i>
<i>Erika Uytterhoeven</i>	<i>27th Middlesex</i>	<i>2/6/2025</i>
<i>Jacob R. Oliveira</i>	<i>Hampden, Hampshire and Worcester</i>	<i>2/10/2025</i>
<i>Natalie M. Higgins</i>	<i>4th Worcester</i>	<i>2/10/2025</i>
<i>James K. Hawkins</i>	<i>2nd Bristol</i>	<i>2/12/2025</i>
<i>Mike Connolly</i>	<i>26th Middlesex</i>	<i>2/13/2025</i>
<i>James B. Eldridge</i>	<i>Middlesex and Worcester</i>	<i>3/3/2025</i>
<i>James C. Arena-DeRosa</i>	<i>8th Middlesex</i>	<i>3/3/2025</i>
<i>David Henry Argosky LeBoeuf</i>	<i>17th Worcester</i>	<i>3/11/2025</i>
<i>Susannah M. Whipps</i>	<i>2nd Franklin</i>	<i>3/19/2025</i>
<i>Mindy Domb</i>	<i>3rd Hampshire</i>	<i>3/26/2025</i>
<i>Angelo J. Puppolo, Jr.</i>	<i>12th Hampden</i>	<i>4/7/2025</i>
<i>Margaret R. Scarsdale</i>	<i>1st Middlesex</i>	<i>4/7/2025</i>

<i>Adam J. Scanlon</i>	<i>14th Bristol</i>	<i>4/11/2025</i>
<i>Michelle L. Badger</i>	<i>1st Plymouth</i>	<i>4/11/2025</i>
<i>Paul R. Feeney</i>	<i>Bristol and Norfolk</i>	<i>6/11/2025</i>
<i>Estela A. Reyes</i>	<i>4th Essex</i>	<i>5/28/2025</i>
<i>Lisa Field</i>	<i>3rd Bristol</i>	<i>9/3/2025</i>

HOUSE No. 544

By Representative Decker of Cambridge, a petition (accompanied by bill, House, No. 544) of Marjorie C. Decker and others relative to a program to support the social, emotional and physical wellbeing of students and educators in public schools. Education.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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

An Act to establish the Whole Child Grant Program.

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 29 of the General Laws, as appearing in the 2022 Official Edition,
2 is hereby amended by inserting after section 2AAAAAA the following section:-

3 Section BBBBBB. Whole Child Grant Program Fund

4 (a) There is hereby established and set up on the books of the commonwealth a separate
5 fund, to be administered by the department of elementary and secondary education, which shall
6 be known as the Whole Child Grant Program Fund. The fund shall be credited with: (i)
7 appropriations, bond proceeds or other money authorized or transferred by the general court and
8 specifically designated to be credited to the fund; (ii) funds from public and private sources,
9 including, but not limited to gifts, grants and donations; and (iii) any interest earned on such
10 money. Amounts credited to the fund shall not be subject to further appropriation and any money
11 remaining in the fund at the end of a fiscal year shall not revert to the General Fund and shall
12 remain available for purposes pursuant to paragraph (b) of this section.

13 (b) Amounts credited to the fund shall be used, without further appropriation, to
14 administer and fund the Whole Child Grant Program established pursuant to section 100 of
15 chapter 71 of the general laws. If the funds in this account are insufficient to fully fund the grant,
16 the department of elementary and secondary education shall submit to the house and senate
17 committees on ways and means a request for an additional appropriation to fully fund the grant.

18 (c) Annually, not later than October 1, the department of elementary and secondary
19 education shall report to the clerks of the house of representatives and the senate, the joint
20 committee on education and the house and senate committees on ways and means on the fund's
21 activities. The report shall include, but not be limited to: (i) the source and amount of funds
22 received; (ii) the expenditures made from the fund; and (iii) the anticipated funding obligation
23 for the next fiscal year. The report shall be publicly available on the department's website.

24 SECTION 2. Chapter 71 of the General Laws, as appearing in the 2022 Official Edition,
25 is hereby amended by inserting, after section 99, the following new section:-

26 Section 100.

27 (a) The department shall, subject to appropriation, establish and administer a grant
28 program, to be known as the Whole Child Grant Program, for the purpose of providing public
29 school districts, as defined in Section 2 of chapter 70 of the general laws, with funds to support
30 the social, emotional and physical wellbeing of students and educators.

31 (b) The department shall, subject to the approval of the board, promulgate regulations
32 governing the grant program. The regulations shall include, but not be limited to, the following
33 provisions:

34 (1) Eligible uses of grant funds shall include, but, not be limited to, the following: (i)
35 hiring one or more school nurses to meet the Department of Public Health School Health
36 Services Unit school nurse staffing recommendations and completing an assessment of the health
37 care needs of the student population pursuant to Department of Public Health School Health
38 Services Unit recommendations; (ii) adopting the Massachusetts Model 3.0: A Framework for
39 Comprehensive School Counseling Programs and hiring one or more school counselors certified
40 under section 38G of this chapter to meet a school counselor staffing recommendation which
41 shall be developed by the department and take into account the American School Counselor
42 Association recommendation of at least one full-time school counselor for every 250 students;
43 (iii) hiring one or more school adjustment counselors certified under section 38G of this chapter
44 to meet a school adjustment counselor staffing recommendation which shall be developed by the
45 department; (iv) hiring one or more licensed social workers certified under section 38G of this
46 chapter to meet a school social worker staffing recommendation which shall be developed by the
47 department and take into account the National Association of Social Workers recommendation of
48 at least one school social worker for every 250 students; (v) hiring one or more school
49 psychologists certified under section 38G of this chapter to meet the National Association of
50 School Psychologists recommendation of at least one full-time school psychologist for every 500
51 students; (vi) hiring other school personnel that directly support the academic, social, emotional
52 and physical wellbeing of students including, but not limited to, education support professionals;
53 (vii) implementing elements of the statewide birth through higher education framework for
54 mental and behavioral health established pursuant to chapter 140 of the acts of 2024; (viii)
55 developing and implementing policies and programs to ensure the academic, social, emotional
56 and physical wellbeing and safety of students and educators; (ix) providing ongoing, specialized,

57 relevant, and research-based professional development opportunities to educators, including
58 administrators, that are specific to the role for which they are hired and that foster the
59 development of trauma-sensitive environments for students and educators; (x) developing and
60 implementing policies related to student access to cell phones, other technological devices and
61 social media during the school day and on school grounds; and (xi) recruitment and retention
62 programs to support the hiring of school personnel pursuant to clauses i-vi of this paragraph;
63 provided, that, such recruitment and retention programs shall prioritize attracting individuals
64 from underrepresented populations to diversify the educator workforce consistent with chapter
65 132 of the acts of 2019.

66 (2) As a condition for receiving grants under this section, the department shall require
67 school districts to submit a plan that details how grant funds will be allocated in accordance with
68 paragraph (1) of subsection (b) of this section. School districts shall work with employee
69 organizations, as defined in chapter 150E of the general laws, representing employees within the
70 school district to develop said plans and school districts shall agree to use the grant funds to
71 supplement, not supplant, existing district funding for personnel and programs.

72 (3) The department shall establish and administer an annual reporting process to monitor
73 whether a school district has met or is making reasonable progress toward the stated purpose or
74 purposes for the grant funding that are outlined in its plan. Assuming compliance with this
75 section, as determined by the department, grants shall be renewed annually, subject to
76 appropriation.

77 (c) The department shall disburse funds to school districts on a per-pupil basis in
78 accordance with the following formula: \$150 per pupil for districts in which 20 percent or more

79 of the students are designated as low-income, as defined in said section 2 of said chapter 70;
80 \$100 per pupil for districts in which 10 to 20 percent of students are designated as low-income,
81 as so defined; and \$50 per pupil for districts in which less than 10 percent of students are
82 designated as low-income, as so defined.