

HOUSE No. 557

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PRESENTED BY:

Carol A. Doherty

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 expanding reasons for excused absences from school to include mental or behavioral health.

PETITION OF:

NAME:	DISTRICT/ADDRESS:	DATE ADDED:
<i>Carol A. Doherty</i>	<i>3rd Bristol</i>	<i>1/16/2025</i>
<i>James K. Hawkins</i>	<i>2nd Bristol</i>	<i>2/11/2025</i>

HOUSE No. 557

By Representative Doherty of Taunton, a petition (accompanied by bill, House, No. 557) of Carol A. Doherty and James K. Hawkins relative to excused absences from school. Education.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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

An Act expanding reasons for excused absences from school to include mental or behavioral health.

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. Section 1 of Chapter 76 of the General Laws, as appearing in the 2020
2 Official Edition, is hereby amended by inserting in line 25, after the words “any period of six
3 months”, the following:-

4 “, provided that a school shall excuse absences due to mental health symptoms in the
5 same manner that absences are excused for physical health symptoms. Likewise, any
6 requirement for documentation, either from a parent or health professional, shall be consistent
7 for absence due to mental health symptoms as for physical health symptoms. When
8 documentation is required of a healthcare professional, a school shall accept documentation from
9 licensed mental health care professionals in the same manner as documentation from other health
10 care professionals. A child who is absent due to mental or behavioral health shall be offered the
11 opportunity to meet with a certified school counselor upon return to school, but shall not be
12 required to do so.”