

**HOUSE . . . . . No. 596**

**The Commonwealth of Massachusetts**

PRESENTED BY:

***James K. Hawkins***

*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 ensure that all students are prepared for future success.

PETITION OF:

NAME:	DISTRICT/ADDRESS:	DATE ADDED:
<i>James K. Hawkins</i>	<i>2nd Bristol</i>	<i>1/15/2025</i>
<i>Vanna Howard</i>	<i>17th Middlesex</i>	<i>2/14/2025</i>
<i>Michael D. Brady</i>	<i>Second Plymouth and Norfolk</i>	<i>2/14/2025</i>
<i>Christopher Richard Flanagan</i>	<i>1st Barnstable</i>	<i>2/14/2025</i>
<i>Rodney M. Elliott</i>	<i>16th Middlesex</i>	<i>2/14/2025</i>
<i>Samantha Montaño</i>	<i>15th Suffolk</i>	<i>2/14/2025</i>
<i>Brian W. Murray</i>	<i>10th Worcester</i>	<i>2/14/2025</i>
<i>Erika Uyterhoeven</i>	<i>27th Middlesex</i>	<i>2/14/2025</i>
<i>Jacob R. Oliveira</i>	<i>Hampden, Hampshire and Worcester</i>	<i>2/14/2025</i>
<i>Natalie M. Higgins</i>	<i>4th Worcester</i>	<i>2/14/2025</i>
<i>Mike Connolly</i>	<i>26th Middlesex</i>	<i>2/14/2025</i>
<i>Lindsay N. Sabadosa</i>	<i>1st Hampshire</i>	<i>2/25/2025</i>
<i>Tara T. Hong</i>	<i>18th Middlesex</i>	<i>2/25/2025</i>
<i>James B. Eldridge</i>	<i>Middlesex and Worcester</i>	<i>3/24/2025</i>
<i>James C. Arena-DeRosa</i>	<i>8th Middlesex</i>	<i>3/24/2025</i>
<i>David Henry Argosky LeBoeuf</i>	<i>17th Worcester</i>	<i>3/24/2025</i>
<i>Margaret R. Scarsdale</i>	<i>1st Middlesex</i>	<i>4/2/2025</i>
<i>Mary S. Keefe</i>	<i>15th Worcester</i>	<i>4/2/2025</i>

**HOUSE . . . . . No. 596**

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By Representative Hawkins of Attleboro, a petition (accompanied by bill, House, No. 596) of James K. Hawkins and others for legislation to align high school courses with college and workforce expectations. Education.

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**The Commonwealth of Massachusetts**

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**In the One Hundred and Ninety-Fourth General Court  
(2025-2026)**  
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An Act to ensure that all students are prepared for future success.

*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 69 of the General Laws is hereby amended by inserting after  
2 section 37 the following section:-

3           Section 38. MassCore

4           (a) The department shall, in collaboration with the MassCore advisory council established  
5 pursuant to subsection (d) and subject to the approval of the board, develop, implement and  
6 administer a statewide program of study, to be known as MassCore, to align high school courses  
7 with college and workforce expectations and to ensure that all students are prepared to be  
8 knowledgeable, empowered and civically engaged adults who can thrive upon high school  
9 graduation and throughout their lives. MassCore shall, except as otherwise herein provided, be a  
10 required program of study for all high school students in the commonwealth beginning with  
11 students entering ninth grade in the 2027-2028 school year.

12 (b) MassCore shall consist of four units of English, four units of mathematics, three units  
13 of a lab-based science, three units of history, two units of the same world language, one unit of  
14 the arts and five additional core elective courses; provided, however, that the MassCore program  
15 of study may be amended upon a joint recommendation to the board by the department and the  
16 MassCore advisory council and subject to the approval of the board.

17 All MassCore courses shall be aligned with the appropriate grade-level standards in the  
18 Massachusetts curriculum frameworks. School districts and educators shall have flexibility and  
19 professional autonomy in selecting curriculum and in designing and administering teaching and  
20 learning in line with the appropriate grade-level standards.

21 (c) The department shall, in collaboration with the MassCore advisory council and  
22 subject to the approval of the board, develop and promulgate regulations governing the  
23 implementation, administration and enforcement of this section, which shall include, but not be  
24 limited to: (i) creating a waiver process by which certain student subgroups, including, but not  
25 limited to, multilingual learners, students with disabilities and students who are newly enrolled in  
26 a public school in the commonwealth may be exempt from some or all of the MassCore  
27 requirements; (ii) creating a process by which school districts may, subject to approval by the  
28 department, award high school credit in compliance with this section for MassCore-equivalent  
29 courses taken in middle school; (iii) creating a process by which school districts may receive a  
30 temporary waiver of the requirements of this section due to a demonstrated hardship; (iv)  
31 ensuring flexibility for students in selecting courses that satisfy the MassCore requirements,  
32 including within subject areas, and ensuring flexibility in meeting the MassCore requirements for  
33 students enrolled in state-approved career and technical education programs; (v) establishing a  
34 reporting process for school districts to demonstrate compliance with the MassCore

35 requirements; and (vi) establishing a process for recommending changes or updates to MassCore  
36 that shall include public input.

37 Said regulations shall be developed using a transparent and inclusive process that  
38 meaningfully engages students, educators, administrators, parents and other stakeholders,  
39 particularly those from historically marginalized and underserved communities and populations.  
40 In developing said regulations, the department and the MassCore advisory council shall jointly  
41 convene not less

42 than 2 public meetings across the commonwealth, shall create and administer a statewide  
43 survey open to members of the public and available in multiple languages, and may hold  
44 additional hearings and other forums as necessary.

45 (d) There shall be a MassCore advisory council to collaborate with and advise the  
46 department on all matters related to MassCore and the implementation of this section. The  
47 advisory council shall consist of: 1 member who shall be appointed by the Massachusetts  
48 Teachers Association; 1 member who shall be appointed by the American Federation of  
49 Teachers, Massachusetts; 1 member who shall be appointed by the Massachusetts Association of  
50 School Superintendents, Inc.; 1 member who shall be appointed by the Massachusetts  
51 Association of School Committees, Inc.; 1 member who shall be appointed by the Massachusetts  
52 Parent Teachers Association; 1 member who shall be appointed by the Massachusetts  
53 Association of Regional Schools; 1 member who shall be appointed by the Massachusetts  
54 Association of Vocational Administrators Inc.; 1 member who shall be appointed by the  
55 Massachusetts School Counselors Association; 1 member who shall be a high school student  
56 appointed by the Massachusetts Association of Student Representatives; 1 member who shall be

57 appointed by the NAACP; 1 member who shall be appointed by the Massachusetts Immigrant  
58 and Refugee Advocacy Coalition; 1 member who shall be appointed by Citizens for Public  
59 Schools; 1 member who shall be appointed by the Massachusetts Advocates for Children; 1  
60 member who shall be appointed by the Massachusetts Consortium for Innovative Education  
61 Assessment; and 1 member who shall be a researcher from a public university in the  
62 commonwealth with expertise in the area of public elementary and secondary education, selected  
63 by the members of the advisory council.

64 The advisory council shall determine the means of conducting its work and shall meet as  
65 often as the members shall determine. The department and the advisory council shall meet at  
66 least quarterly.

67 (e) By December 31, 2025, school districts shall report to the department on their  
68 capacity to comply with this section. The report shall be submitted in a form and manner  
69 prescribed by the department and shall include, but not be limited to, whether a district is already  
70 in compliance with the course requirements of this section and, for those districts not already in  
71 compliance, an estimate of additional financial costs directly related to coming into compliance  
72 and whether such costs will create a demonstrated financial hardship for the school district  
73 including, but not limited to, by directly resulting in cuts to existing school staff, courses or  
74 programs.

75 By February 1, 2026, the department shall submit to the general court a request for an  
76 appropriation to those school districts with a demonstrated financial hardship, as determined by  
77 the department, for the total costs associated with coming into compliance with the requirements  
78 of this section. The MassCore course and program requirements in this section shall not be in

79 effect for students in said school districts until such a time that said appropriation is made to said  
80 school districts.

81 (f) Nothing in this section shall be construed as prohibiting a school district from  
82 implementing MassCore prior to the 2027-2028 school year or from implementing course or unit  
83 requirements for students that exceed the requirements of MassCore.

84 SECTION 2. (a) There shall be a special commission to study and make  
85 recommendations for more authentic and accurate methods of assessing students in the  
86 commonwealth. The

87 commission shall examine: (i) the requirements of the Every Student Succeeds Act of  
88 2015, codified at 20 U.S.C. § 6301 et. seq., and potential waivers; (ii) alternative assessment  
89 measures in place or being considered nationwide; and (iii) research data on the knowledge and  
90 skills that parents, elementary and secondary educators, higher education educators, and business  
91 leaders want students to have upon high school graduation.

92 Regarding the assessment of students, the special commission shall consider assessments  
93 other than conventional methods, including, but not limited to: work samples, capstone, service  
94 learning or other projects, portfolios, performance assessments and other authentic and direct  
95 gauges of student performance that encourage effective instruction, use strategies for avoiding  
96 racial and ethnic biases, and recognize the strengths of all students.

97 The commission shall recommend strategies for assessing students that comply with  
98 current federal law. The commission may also make recommendations for changes in or waivers  
99 from federal law that would facilitate the implementation of effective assessment strategies.

100 (b) The commission shall consist of: 1 member who shall be appointed by the president  
101 of the senate, who shall serve as co-chair; 1 member who shall be appointed by the speaker of  
102 the house of representatives, who shall serve as co-chair; 1 member who shall be appointed by  
103 the minority leader of the senate; 1 member who shall be appointed by the minority leader of the  
104 house of representatives; the secretary of education, or a designee; the commissioner of  
105 elementary and secondary education, or a designee; 1 member who shall be appointed by the  
106 Massachusetts Association of School Committees, Inc.; 1 member who shall be appointed by the  
107 Massachusetts Teachers Association; 1 member who shall be appointed by the American  
108 Federation of Teachers, Massachusetts; 1 member who shall be appointed by the Massachusetts  
109 Association of School Superintendents, Inc.; 1 member who shall be appointed by the  
110 Massachusetts Association of Regional Schools; 1 member who shall be appointed by the  
111 Massachusetts Association of Vocational Administrators Inc.; 1 member who shall be appointed  
112 by the Massachusetts Education Justice Alliance; 1 member who shall be appointed by Citizens  
113 for Public Schools; 1 member who shall be appointed by the NAACP; 1 member who shall be  
114 appointed by the Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition; 1 member who  
115 shall be appointed by Multicultural Education, Training, and Advocacy, Inc; 2 members who  
116 shall be appointed by the Massachusetts Consortium for Innovative Education Assessment, 1 of  
117 whom shall be a high school student attending a public high school in the consortium; 1 member  
118 who shall be a high school student appointed by Youth SOL; 1 member who shall be a high  
119 school student appointed by the Massachusetts Association of Student Representatives; 1  
120 member who shall be appointed by the Massachusetts School Counselors Association; 1 member  
121 who shall be appointed by the Black Educators Alliance of Massachusetts; 1 member who shall  
122 be appointed by the Massachusetts Asian American Educators Association; 1 member who shall

123 be appointed by the Gaston Institute for Latino Community Development and Public Policy of  
124 the University of Massachusetts Boston; 1 member who shall be appointed by the Massachusetts  
125 Advocates for Children; 1 member who shall be appointed by the Massachusetts Organization of  
126 Educational Collaboratives; 1 member who shall be appointed by the Massachusetts Parent  
127 Teachers Association; 1 member who shall be appointed by the Center for Law and Education; 1  
128 member who shall be appointed by the Center for Antiracist Research at Boston University; 1  
129 member who shall be appointed by the Rural Policy Advisory Commission; 1 member who shall  
130 be appointed by GLSEN Massachusetts; and 1 member who shall be a researcher from a  
131 public university in the commonwealth with expertise in the area of assessment, selected jointly  
132 by the members of the commission. Members shall not receive compensation for their services  
133 but may receive reimbursement for reasonable expenses incurred in carrying out their  
134 responsibilities as members of the commission. The commissioner of elementary and secondary  
135 education shall furnish reasonable staff and other support for the work of the commission.

136 (c) When conducting its work and issuing its recommendations, the commission shall use  
137 a transparent and inclusive process that meaningfully engages students, educators,  
138 administrators, parents and other stakeholders, particularly those from historically marginalized  
139 and underserved communities and populations. The commission shall hold not less than 5 public  
140 meetings across the regions of the commonwealth, shall create and administer a statewide survey  
141 open to members of the public and available in multiple languages, and may hold additional  
142 hearings and other forums as necessary. The commission shall file its report and  
143 recommendations with the clerks of the senate and the house of representatives and the chairs of  
144 the joint committee on education not later than August 31, 2026.