

HOUSE No.

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>

HOUSE No.

[Pin Slip]

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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

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.