

SENATE No. 2609

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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

SENATE, September 22, 2025.

The committee on Education, to whom was referred the petitions (accompanied by bill, Senate, No. 316) of Cynthia Stone Creem for legislation to promote social-emotional learning; and (accompanied by bill, Senate, No. 441) of Rebecca L. Rausch for legislation to ensuring access to mental health supports in K-12 schools, report the accompanying bill (Senate, No. 2609).

For the committee,
Jason M. Lewis

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

An Act to promote social-emotional learning.

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. (a) There shall be a task force established to study and provide
2 recommendations on a statewide birth through higher education framework for social emotional
3 learning and mental and behavioral health.

4 The task force shall consist of 23 members: 1 of whom shall be the secretary of education
5 or a designee who shall serve as co-chair; 1 of whom shall be the secretary of health and human
6 services or a designee who shall serve as co-chair; 2 of whom shall be the chairs of the joint
7 committee on education or their designees; 2 of whom shall be the chairs of the joint committee
8 on higher education or their designees, 1 of whom shall be a member of the safe and supportive
9 schools commission appointed by the safe and supportive schools commission; 1 of whom shall
10 be a school superintendent appointed by the Massachusetts Association of School
11 Superintendents; 1 of whom shall be a school psychologist appointed by the Massachusetts
12 School Psychologists Association; 1 of whom shall be a school adjustment counselor or guidance
13 counselor appointed by the Massachusetts School Counselors Association; 1 of whom shall be a
14 member of the American College Counseling Association appointed by the American College

15 Counseling Association; 1 of whom shall be an advocate with experience in education,
16 behavioral health, and the impact of trauma on learning appointed by Massachusetts Advocates
17 for Children; 1 of whom shall be appointed by the Massachusetts League of Community Health
18 Centers; 1 of whom shall be appointed by the Massachusetts Coalition for Suicide Prevention; 1
19 of whom shall be appointed by Strategies for Children; 1 of whom shall be a school nurse
20 ,appointed by the Massachusetts School Nurse Organization, Inc.; 1 of whom shall be appointed
21 by the Massachusetts Center on Child Wellbeing & Trauma; 1 of whom shall be a social worker
22 appointed by the Massachusetts Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers; 1 of
23 whom shall be a appointed by the Children’s Mental Health Campaign; 1 of whom shall be
24 appointed by the Behavioral Health Integrated Resources for Children Project Advisory Council;
25 1 of whom shall be a parent of a current student appointed by the Parent/Professional Advocacy
26 League; 1 of whom shall be a student member of the state student advisory council appointed by
27 the state student advisory council; and 1 of whom shall be appointed by the Federation for
28 Children with Special Needs.

29 The task force shall study and provide recommendations on the following: (i) the
30 development of a framework for integrating equitable, accessible, and culturally and
31 linguistically sustaining social emotional learning in educational settings from birth through
32 higher education into curriculum; (ii) guiding principles and strategies related to providing social
33 emotional supports for students in schools; (iii) implementing targeted and evidenced-based
34 supports for students to meet social and behavioral expectations aligned with social emotional
35 learning competencies; (iv) developing and promoting professional development for school and
36 district staff to recognize and respond to mental and behavioral health challenges that may arise
37 during in-person learning; (v) implementing strategies related to youth suicide prevention; (vi)

38 identifying and developing partnerships between school districts and charter schools and
39 agencies and community organizations for referring students who require additional support to
40 health, behavioral health, substance use, and social support services; and (vii) how online
41 advertising and social media affect students' short- and long-term physical, emotional, and
42 cognitive development.

43 (b) The task force shall convene beginning not later than 90 days after the effective date
44 of this act and meet not fewer than 4 times within the first year prior to submitting its findings
45 and recommendations; provided, that after the first year, the commission shall meet at a
46 frequency determined by the co-chairs of the commission until the submission of the findings
47 and recommendations or two years from the initial convening, whichever comes first. The task
48 force shall submit its findings and recommendations, including development of shared language,
49 identification of best practices, and mechanisms to monitor progress, to the executive office of
50 education, the executive office of health and human services, the clerks of the house of
51 representatives and the senate, the joint committee on mental health, substance use and recovery,
52 and the joint committee on education not later than 2 years after the effective date of this act.

53 SECTION 2. Notwithstanding any general or special law to the contrary, not later than
54 December 1, 2026, the department of elementary and secondary education shall, in collaboration
55 with the executive office of health and human services, the department of mental health, and in
56 consultation with the task force established to study a statewide birth through higher education
57 framework for social emotional learning and mental and behavioral health, experts in childhood
58 mental health, and educators from public elementary and secondary schools, develop and publish
59 guidance for supporting the social emotional development and mental health of students in
60 kindergarten through twelfth grade. The guidance shall include, but not be limited to, the

61 following: (i) guiding principles and strategies related to student social and emotional health and
62 wellbeing; (ii) integrating equitable, accessible, and culturally and linguistically sustaining social
63 emotional learning skills into student learning experiences; (iii) strategies related to suicide
64 prevention; (iv) strategies to develop students' social emotional learning competencies, including
65 self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision
66 making; and (v) how online advertising and social media affect students' short- and long-term
67 physical, emotional, and cognitive development. The guidance shall be able to be integrated into
68 the general academic curricula, including the promotion of mental and behavioral health during
69 school time and in extracurricular activities. A school district shall consider the guidance if it
70 elects to integrate social emotional learning and mental and behavioral health into academic
71 curricula.

72 SECTION 3. Section 1P of chapter 69 of the General Laws, as appearing in the 2022
73 Official Edition, is hereby amended by inserting after the phrase, "inclusion of students with
74 disabilities," in lines 11-12, the following words: - "the influence of technology on the short- and
75 long-term physical, emotional, and cognitive development of students."

76 SECTION 4. Subsection (g) of section 1P of chapter 69 of General Laws, as appearing in
77 the 2022 Official Edition, is hereby amended by striking out, in lines 128-132, the words, "1 of
78 whom shall be a former member of the behavioral health and public schools task force who
79 participated in the development and statewide evaluation of the self-assessment tool; 1 of whom
80 shall be a former member of the behavioral health and public schools task force with experience
81 implementing the framework;" and inserting in place the following words:- "1 of whom shall
82 have experience in implementing the self-assessment tool; 1 of whom shall have experience
83 implementing the framework."

84 SECTION 5. Subsection (b) of section 37Q of chapter 71 of the General Laws is hereby
85 amended by inserting after the first sentence the following sentence: - Each plan shall include, to
86 the extent possible, a policy to identify and develop partnerships with community organizations
87 and local and regional boards of public health to refer students to health, behavioral health,
88 substance use, and social support services.

89 SECTION 6. Section 38G of chapter 71 of the General Laws is hereby amended by
90 inserting after the word “styles,” in line 251, the following words: - “strategies to develop
91 students’ social emotional learning competencies, including self-awareness, self-management,
92 social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making.”

93 SECTION 7. Section 38G of chapter 71 of the General Laws is hereby amended by
94 inserting after the word “styles,” in line 287, the following words: - “strategies to develop
95 students’ social emotional learning competencies, including self-awareness, self-management,
96 social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making.”