

SENATE No. 325

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PRESENTED BY:

John J. Cronin

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 create and expand student pathways to success.

PETITION OF:

NAME:

John J. Cronin

DISTRICT/ADDRESS:

Worcester and Middlesex

SENATE No. 325

By Mr. Cronin, a petition (accompanied by bill, Senate, No. 325) of John J. Cronin for legislation to create and expand student pathways to success. Education.

[SIMILAR MATTER FILED IN PREVIOUS SESSION
SEE SENATE, NO. 256 OF 2023-2024.]

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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

An Act to create and expand student pathways to 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 6 of the General laws, as appearing in the 2018 official edition, is
2 hereby amended by inserting, after Section 17A, the following section:-

3 “Section 17B. (a) There is hereby established within the office of the governor a
4 workforce skills cabinet, hereinafter referred to as the “cabinet,” to serve as a cross-agency
5 governance structure for the purpose of advising the governor and relevant executive branch
6 agencies as well as the general court, and aligning the programs and policies of the executive
7 offices of labor and workforce development, education and housing and economic development
8 to improve and expand workforce skills and college and career readiness to meet the varying
9 current and future needs of the Commonwealth and its regions.

10 (b) The cabinet shall consist of:

- 11 1. the secretary of the executive office of education;
- 12 2. the secretary of the executive office of labor and workforce development;
- 13 3. the secretary of the executive office of housing and economic development;
- 14 4. the commissioner of the department of elementary and secondary education;
- 15 5. the commissioner of the department of higher education;
- 16 6. the chairperson of the workforce development board established by section 7 of
- 17 chapter 23H of the MGL;
- 18 7. the executive director of the Massachusetts workforce association;
- 19 8. three members appointed by the governor representing business and industry who-
- 20 (i) are owners of businesses, chief executive or operating officers of businesses, or other
- 21 executives or employees with optimum policymaking or hiring authority; or,
- 22 (ii) represent organizations that represent businesses or industries;
- 23 9. two members appointed by the governor who represent the perspectives and interests
- 24 of current or future workforce participants, including the parents of school age students; and,
- 25 10. three members appointed by the governor from amongst other college and career
- 26 readiness and workforce development stakeholder groups.
- 27 (c) The appointed members shall each serve three year terms at the pleasure of the
- 28 governor and serve without compensation.

29 (d) The governor shall select an individual from amongst its membership to chair the
30 cabinet. The chair shall serve at the pleasure of the governor.

31 (e) The cabinet shall meet monthly and their meetings shall be public.

32 (f) In addition to, and within, the general mission of the cabinet as stated in subparagraph
33 (a), the cabinet shall:

34 (i) facilitate alignment, collaboration, strategic planning, and joint execution among
35 participating state agencies, offices, and other stakeholders around the development of workforce
36 development strategies for the Commonwealth and the expansion of college and career readiness
37 pathways for all, with an emphasis on high school programs;

38 (ii) conduct a biennial return on investment audit report of the state's public education
39 high school college and career pathways programs that shall determine the alignment of existing
40 career pathways offerings, including career technical education and vocational programs, with
41 state and regional labor market plans, employer demand, postsecondary degree or certificate
42 programs, and industry-valued credentials. Said audit report shall a) identify the pathways
43 offerings that are linked to high-skill, higher-wage, in-demand occupations; b) evaluate student
44 participation and outcomes (such as postsecondary attainment, employment status, and wage
45 earnings) associated with each pathways program; c) provide information that can be used to
46 identify career pathway programs that are not aligned with labor market need and provide
47 recommendations for phasing out said programs with a plan for shifting resources to pathway
48 programs necessary to ensure the state's future competitiveness; d) provide information about the
49 availability, quality and student outcomes of pathways offerings to support student and their
50 families in making informed decisions about their educational options. This audit report should

51 include an analysis regarding the equity of access to college and career pathways programs in the
52 state's public high schools and recommendations for improving access to all student groups
53 regardless of student background or geographic location. The audit report shall include
54 recommendations to improve labor market alignment, quality, student access and outcomes, and
55 operational efficiencies across the state's pathways program offerings. The report shall be made
56 available to the public and presented to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
57 as well as the legislature's joint committee on education.

58 (iii) develop and release an annual report on the status of the state's job market at the
59 time of the report and an analysis of the labor market need for the ensuing five year period
60 necessary to ensure the economic competitiveness of the Commonwealth. Said report should
61 include recommendations on what state policies and investments the state will need to make to
62 ensure the state has the workforce it will need to address the future labor market need, including
63 identification of those business sectors poised to experience growth and anticipated gaps in
64 filling the employment need in those fields; a progress report on the status of career pathway
65 programs in the state's high schools, in higher education and in workforce training programs in
66 targeted industries; and an analysis of data regarding the skills required for key industry jobs.
67 The cabinet shall distribute this report, along with any related recommendations, to the office of
68 the governor and relevant state agencies for the purpose of guiding decision-making in said
69 agencies with regard to policy adoption and development and state funding investments. The
70 report shall also be submitted to the legislature's committees on ways and made available to the
71 public no later than December 31st in any year.

72 (iv) oversee the improvement of data collection and reporting on pathways programs by
73 facilitating data linkages between agencies, creating mechanisms to analyze meaningful growth
74 data by specific pathways programs, and building new public-facing data tools;

75 (v) advise the departments of elementary and secondary education and higher education
76 with regard to student acquisition of the employability skills that should be achieved in their
77 preparation for career success; and,

78 (vi) submit an annual report to the chairs of the house and senate committees on ways and
79 means, the chairs of the joint education committee, and the chairs of the joint committee on
80 higher education detailing the Cabinet's work over the past year.

81 (g) The workforce skills cabinet shall be charged with developing and maintaining a set
82 of strategic goals for the Commonwealth, its agencies and education and training institutions, in
83 coordination with the governor's office and in consultation with the departments of elementary
84 and secondary education and higher education, regarding the expansion of college and career
85 pathway programs for students that enhance and improve the likelihood of successful outcomes
86 for high school graduates in college and career endeavors. The goals shall include the
87 achievement of universal access for all of the state's high school students to said pathway
88 programs, which shall include, but not be limited to, early college programs, vocational/technical
89 education programs, innovation pathway programs, STEM tech career academies, and other
90 similar programs and courses of study. The cabinet will include, in its consideration of the
91 establishment of said goals, that each pathway program should contain at least one, or more, of
92 the following elements:

93 (i) the ability of students to earn college credit while in high school;

- 94 (ii) the ability of students to earn industry-recognized credentials in high school;
- 95 (iii) the ability of students to participate in a meaningful and relevant work-based
- 96 learning experience while in high school; and,
- 97 (iv) the ability of students to receive dedicated career counseling while in high school.

98 The cabinet will develop, in consultation with the governor's office and the departments

99 of elementary and secondary education and higher education, a plan for the achievement of the

100 goals established in accord with subsection (a) that includes strategies to be implemented,

101 timelines for meeting interim outcomes and final outcome, resources to be allocated, and any

102 other consideration, including an accounting of the persistent inequities inherent in not achieving

103 said goals. The cabinet will report annually on its progress and that of the Commonwealth and its

104 agencies in achieving universal student access to student learning pathways and establish

105 milestone outcomes toward that achievement whose progress will be reported on as part of its

106 annual reporting. The cabinet will undertake periodic review and updating of said goals to ensure

107 continued progress in meeting the state's needs with regard economic competitiveness and

108 workforce preparation.

109 (h) The cabinet shall be staffed by a full time Executive Director who shall be an

110 employee of the office of the governor, selected in consultation with the cabinet.

111 (i) The cabinet shall have the ability to receive funding to hire additional technical and

112 administrative staff, to award contracts and grants, and to take actions necessary to fulfilling its

113 responsibilities stated herein or as otherwise assigned by the governor.