

SENATE No. 437

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PRESENTED BY:

Pavel M. Payano

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 relative to dropout prevention and student recovery.

PETITION OF:

NAME:

Pavel M. Payano

DISTRICT/ADDRESS:

First Essex

SENATE No. 437

By Mr. Payano, a petition (accompanied by bill, Senate, No. 437) of Pavel M. Payano for legislation relative to dropout prevention and student recovery. Education.

[SIMILAR MATTER FILED IN PREVIOUS SESSION
SEE SENATE, NO. 341 OF 2023-2024.]

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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

An Act relative to dropout prevention and student recovery.

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 1B of chapter 69 of the General Laws, as appearing in the 2022
2 Official Edition, is hereby amended by inserting after the word “attendance”, in line 120, the
3 following words:- ; provided, however, that all children under the age of 18 shall be required to
4 attend school if they have not graduated from high school.

5 SECTION 2. Chapter 741 of the acts of 1965 is hereby repealed.

6 SECTION 3. (a) Subject to appropriation, the department of elementary and secondary
7 education shall develop and administer a 3-year pilot program for dropout prevention and
8 recovery programs for school districts with annual dropout rates greater than the state average.
9 The pilot program shall be a competitive grant process for school districts or local community
10 agencies serving students who reside in the districts.

11 (b) The dropout prevention and recovery programs shall target high school students who
12 have dropped out of school or are at risk of dropping out of school using at least 1 of the methods
13 described in clauses (i) to (iv), inclusive.

14 (i) Alternative education, which shall mean diploma or general educational development
15 granting programs that use evidence-based instruction and student support strategies designed to
16 meet the needs of the target population and prepare them for postsecondary education or training.
17 The evidence-based instruction and student support strategies may include, but shall not be
18 limited to: smaller class size, competency-based learning, project-based learning, work-based
19 learning, community service learning, graduation coaching, case management, family
20 engagement, wraparound support, restorative justice and social service referrals;

21 (ii) Graduation coaches, who shall be professionals with youth development and
22 academic support expertise and shall provide graduation plans to the target population. The
23 graduation plans shall include, at a minimum, academic, career and postsecondary goals.
24 Graduation coaches shall also provide follow-up support to complete the graduation plans,
25 navigate academic requirements, engage families, overcome socio-emotional barriers and secure
26 appropriate social services.

27 (iii) Dropout outreach and recovery programs, which shall mean targeted outreach and
28 transition support for students who have dropped out of school. The programs shall, at a
29 minimum: (1) reach out to students; (1) determine their academic status and personal
30 circumstances; (3) assist students in enrolling in a high school or general educational
31 development program; and (4) provide transitional support and track student academic progress.

32 (iv) Expectant and parenting student support, which may include, but shall not be limited
33 to: (1) the development and implementation of school policies that set high academic
34 expectations, establish procedures for maternity and paternity leave, and provide flexible
35 scheduling; (2) expectant and parenting student liaisons who shall work with students to develop
36 graduation plans that include, at a minimum, academic, career and postsecondary goals and who
37 provide follow-up support to complete the graduation plans, navigate academic requirements,
38 engage families, overcome socio-emotional barriers and secure appropriate social services; and
39 (3) annual data collection that shall include, but shall not limited to, the number of parenting
40 students in the district, any supports or interventions provided to the parenting students, and
41 parenting student progress toward and completion of secondary school.

42 (c) The department shall develop guidelines for an annual review of the progress being
43 made by each district and local community agency participating in the pilot program. Each
44 district and agency in the pilot program shall participate in any evaluation or accountability
45 process implemented by or authorized by the department. The department shall prepare and
46 submit an annual report describing and analyzing the implementation of the pilot program in all
47 participating districts. The report shall include, but shall not be limited to: (i) the number of
48 participating school districts, schools and local community agencies; (ii) the number of students
49 served and the type and duration of those services; (iii) the progress made by those students
50 toward attaining a high school diploma or general educational development; and (iv) the number
51 of students served who have attained a high school diploma or passed the general educational
52 development test. The department shall file its annual report not later than September 1 of each
53 year by filing the same with the clerks of the house of representatives and the senate who shall
54 forward a copy of the report to the joint committee on education. The department shall file a final

55 report within 6 months of the conclusion of the 3-year pilot period that shall include an analysis
56 of all relevant data so as to determine the effectiveness of the program and specific legislative
57 recommendations, including whether the program should be expanded, maintained or
58 discontinued, by filing the same with the clerks of the house of representatives and the senate
59 who shall forward a copy of the report to the joint committee on education.

60 SECTION 4. Section 1 shall take effect on September 1, 2025.