The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

JOINT COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION
STATE HOUSE, BOSTON 02133

Joint Committee on Education

Rep. Kenneth I. Gordon
House Chair

Sen. Jason M. Lewis
Senate Chair

PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE

Date of Hearing: Tuesday, June 17, 2025
Time: 1:00 PM-5:00 PM
Location: B-2 and Virtual

School Climate and Safety

The Joint Committee on Education will hold a hybrid public hearing to solicit written and oral testimony in-person and remotely on the following bills that pertain to School Climate and Safety.

To register to testify virtually, you must provide contact information on the form linked here. Individuals who wish to testify virtually at the Joint Committee on Education upcoming hearing must register by completing this form before **12:00 p.m. on Monday, June 16th, 2025.**

Registration will CLOSE at 12:00 p.m. on Monday, June 16th. Those wishing to testify in person may register in person at the time of the hearing but are encouraged to register ahead of time using this form. The Chair will limit testimony to two minutes per individual and reserves the right to call public officials out of turn.

Please submit written testimony to Fiona Bruce-Baiden at fiona.brucebaiden@mahouse.gov and Emily Reynolds at emily.reynolds@masenate.gov, or to the Committee on Education at 24 Beacon Street, Room 473G, Boston, MA 02133. The Chairs request that those submitting written testimony include "EDUCATION COMMITTEE TESTIMONY" and the bill number IN THE SUBJECT LINE, and provide the committee with your name, organization, and phone number.

All matters filed in the House that are listed above are required to be reported on August 16, 2025, subject to extensions consistent with House Rule 27.

The public is invited to participate in this hybrid hearing, which will be livestreamed on the General Court website, https://malegislature.gov/. Hearings will be recorded and posted publicly on the Joint Committee on Education page https://malegislature.gov/Committees/Detail/J14/ Hearings

At the discretion of the Chairs and per committee rules, written testimony received by the committee will be made publicly available. The committee may limit availability or redact testimony that includes sensitive personal information, information about minors, or information that may jeopardize the health, wellness or safety of the testifier or others.

Please be advised that the schedule and agenda are subject to change at the discretion of the chair per committee rules.

You may contact committee staff with any questions at (617) 722-2070 or (617) 722-1206 or email fiona.brucebaiden@mahouse.gov and emily.reynolds@masenate.gov if you have any questions.

Bill No	Bill Sponsor	Bill Title
H753	An Act relative to school security	Xiarhos, Steven George (HOU)
H749	An Act requiring critical incident drills in schools	Walsh, Thomas P. (HOU)
H740	An Act relative to school mascot name changes	Vaughn, Marcus S. (HOU)
H688	An Act relative to public school workplace security	Sabadosa, Lindsay N. (HOU)
H681	An Act relative to combating violence in schools	Reyes, Estela A. (HOU)
H667	An Act relative to school absences	Peisch, Alice Hanlon (HOU)
S453	An Act relative to student absences based on religiously held beliefs	Tarr, Bruce E. (SEN)
H647	An Act relative to school start times for middle and high school students	McMurtry, Paul (HOU)
H638	An Act to protect library patron privacy	Livingstone, Jay D. (HOU)
H591	An Act relative to school bullying	Gregoire, Danielle W. (HOU)
H575	An Act prohibiting the use of Native American mascots by public schools in the Commonwealth	Fluker-Reid, Brandy (HOU)
H549	An Act to regulate the use of mobile communication devices in educational institutions	DeCoste, David F. (HOU)
H548	An Act to promote safe firearm storage education and increase the well-being of students	Decker, Marjorie C. (HOU)
H516	An Act establishing employee screening requirements in schools to prevent child sexual abuse	Blais, Natalie M. (HOU)

H507	**An Act relative to the enforcement of anti-bullying policies in our schools**	**Arriaga, Shirley B. (HOU)**
S461	**An Act to protect children's learning, focus, and emotional health during school hours**	**Velis, John C. (SEN)**
S450	**An Act relative to school safety issues**	**Tarr, Bruce E. (SEN)**
S445	**An Act relative to parental notification in public schools**	**Rush, Michael F. (SEN)**
S434	**An Act relative to the enforcement of anti-bullying policies in our schools**	**Payano, Pavel (SEN)**
S419	**An Act creating a school resource officer grant program and fund**	**O'Connor, Patrick M. (SEN)**
S405	**An Act stopping harm inflicted by the exploitation of life and development**	**Lovely, Joan B. (SEN)**
S404	**An Act relative to supporting survivors of child sexual abuse**	**Lovely, Joan B. (SEN)**
S397	**An Act to promote safe firearm storage education and increase the well-being of students**	**Lewis, Jason M. (SEN)**
S387	**An Act relative to safer schools**	**Kennedy, Robyn K. (SEN)**
S324	**An Act promoting racially integrated schools**	**Crighton, Brendan P. (SEN)**
S312	**An Act prohibiting the use of Native American mascots by public schools in the Commonwealth**	**Comerford, Joanne M. (SEN)**
H715	**An Act relative to phone-free schools**	**Tarsky, Joshua (HOU)**
H696	**An Act establishing a commission regarding phones in schools**	**Scanlon, Adam J. (HOU)**
H574	**An Act relative to the use of mobile devices in public school districts**	**Fiola, Carole A. (HOU)**
S424	**An Act to regulate the use of mobile communication devices in educational institutions**	**O'Connor, Patrick M. (SEN)**
S381	**An Act limiting cell phones in classrooms**	**Keenan, John F. (SEN)**
H533	**An Act to expand the use of career and academic plans**	**Cruz, Manny (HOU)**
S438	**An Act to expand the use of career and academic plans**	**Payano, Pavel (SEN)**
S463	**An Act regulating screen time and technology privacy in early and K-12 education**	**Velis, John C. (SEN)**
S333	**An Act to promote phone free schools**	**Cronin, John J. (SEN)**
S323	**An Act providing for phone free schools**	**Crighton, Brendan P. (SEN)**
H720	**An Act prohibiting cell phone usage during the school day**	**Turco, Jeffrey Rosario (HOU)**

H585	**Resolve authorizing a study of starting times and schedules**	**Gentile, Carmine Lawrence (HOU)**
S360	**An Act relative to school start times for middle and high school students**	**Fernandes, Dylan A. (SEN)**
H666	**An Act promoting safe technology use and distraction-free education for youth**	**Peisch, Alice Hanlon (HOU)**
S335	**An Act promoting safe technology use and distraction-free education for youth**	**Cyr, Julian (SEN)**

Please be advised that the schedule and agenda are subject to change at the discretion of the chair per committee rules.

You may contact committee staff with any questions at (617) 722-2070 or (617) 722-1206.

HOUSE DOCKET, NO. 571 FILED ON: 1/10/2025

Joint Committee on Education

Bill Summary

BILL NUMBER	House, No. 753
TITLE	An Act relative to school security
SPONSOR(S)	Representative Xiarhos of Barnstable
PRIOR HISTORY	N/A
CURRENT LAW	MGL 4:7 pertains to definitions of statutory terms; statutory construction MGL 41:97 pertains to police departments and their establishment MGL 71 pertains to public schools
NOTES	New file.

SUMMARY

This bill aims to enhance safety and security in schools by requiring each school district to develop a response plan to an active shooter situation in conjunction with their local chief of police. In addition to this plan, which must involve training staff and students on policy and protocol in the event of an active shooter, each school district shall have a resource officer whose purpose will be to ensure safety, and whose post will be bound to a memorandum of understanding. Additionally, this bill requires each city and town to establish a special telephone exchange for threats to school buildings and exempts any document which details an emergency protocol for schools from public record. Additionally, this bill requires DESE to assist each school district in their efforts to apply for grants or funds that will support physical security enhancements to school buildings/property.

HOUSE . . . . . No. 753

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PRESENTED BY:

Steven George Xiarhos

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 school security.

PETITION OF:

NAME:	DISTRICT/ADDRESS:	DATE ADDED:
Steven George Xiarhos	*5th Barnstable*	*1/10/2025*
Joseph D. McKenna	*18th Worcester*	*2/11/2025*
Kelly W. Pease	*4th Hampden*	*3/25/2025*

HOUSE DOCKET, NO. 571 FILED ON: 1/10/2025

HOUSE . . . . . No. 753

By Representative Xiarhos of Barnstable, a petition (accompanied by bill, House, No. 753) of Steven George Xiarhos and Joseph D. McKenna relative to the safety and security of school buildings and plans for emergency response to active shooter situations. Education.

[SIMILAR MATTER FILED IN PREVIOUS SESSION
SEE HOUSE, NO. *611* OF 2023-2024.]

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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

An Act relative to school security.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:

SECTION 1. Clause Twenty-sixth of section 7 of chapter 4 of the General Laws, as appearing in the 2020 Official Edition, is hereby amended by adding the following subclause:

(w) any policy or report by any city, town, or school district concerning the safety and security of school buildings and plans for emergency response to active shooter situations.

SECTION 2. Chapter 41 of the General Laws is hereby amended by inserting after section 97D the following section:-

Section 97D½. Every city and town in the commonwealth shall establish a special telephone exchange for the reporting of threats to school buildings, which may be utilized at any hour of day or night, and shall widely publicize this number and the protocol for its usage throughout the city or town.

SECTION 3. Chapter 41 of the General Laws is hereby further amended by inserting after section 98B the following section:-

Section 98B½. (a) In any city or town that accepts the provisions of this section there shall be a school resource officer, as defined in subsection (a) of section 37P of chapter 71, assigned to each school building within such city or town, who will be present within the school building during all regular hours of instruction for the purpose of ensuring school safety and such other duties as the chief of the police department may otherwise determine from time to time. The assignment of a school resource officer shall be accompanied by a memorandum of understanding that shall comply with said section 37P of said chapter 71.

(b) The department of elementary and secondary education shall assist each school district in applying for any available funds or grants to provide support for target hardening and other physical security enhancements to school buildings and school property in each school district of the commonwealth.

SECTION 4. Chapter 71 of the General Laws is hereby amended by inserting after section 2C the following section:-

Section 2C½. Each school district in the commonwealth, subject to appropriation and in coordination with the chief of the local police department, shall implement a specific policy for the training of students and staff members in the appropriate response to active shooters on school grounds. Said policy shall include, at a minimum: (i) requirements for regular training sessions for students and staff in the event of an emergency; (ii) requirements for regular audits of school buildings for safety and security by the school district and police department of the municipality in which the school is located; and (iii) recommendations for making sure every school building has a single access point, hardened locks and windows and a video surveillance

system monitoring the interior and exterior public areas of the school property and connected to local police.

Annually, not later than December 31, each school district shall submit a copy of its policy, together with a report of its activities pursuant to this section, to the department of elementary and secondary education and the executive office of public safety and security for their review and comment. Annually, not later than March 1, the department of elementary and secondary education shall file a report summarizing local compliance with this section with the clerks of the senate and the house of representatives; provided, that no information regarding specific plans, procedures or school buildings shall be considered a public record subject to disclosure, as defined in clause Twenty-Sixth of section 7 of chapter 4.

HOUSE DOCKET, NO. 1769 FILED ON: 1/15/2025

Joint Committee on Education

Bill Summary

BILL NUMBER	House, No. 749
TITLE	An Act requiring critical incident drills in schools
SPONSOR(S)	Representative Thomas P. Walsh of Peabody
PRIOR HISTORY	H.610 of the 2023-24 session; sent to study. H.719 of the 2021-22 session; accompanied new draft H.4540; referred to HWM.
CURRENT LAW	Does not refer to existing law.

SUMMARY

This bill requires the superintendent of each school district to meet annually with the city's police and fire chiefs to develop a school-specific critical incident plan for each school under the superintendent's supervision. The critical incident plan must encompass situations including disasters in which serious bodily injury could occur, shootings, terrorist activities, and bomb threats. The bill also requires that students at each school are instructed on the developed plan, and that it be reviewed annually. It further requires the police chief or designee to visit the school at least twice each year to conduct an unannounced critical incident drill.

HOUSE . . . . . No. 749

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PRESENTED BY:

Thomas P. Walsh

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 requiring critical incident drills in schools.

PETITION OF:

NAME:	DISTRICT/ADDRESS:	DATE ADDED:
Thomas P. Walsh	*12th Essex*	*1/15/2025*

HOUSE DOCKET, NO. 1769 FILED ON: 1/15/2025

HOUSE . . . . . No. 749

By Representative Walsh of Peabody, a petition (accompanied by bill, House, No. 749) of Thomas P. Walsh relative to requiring critical incident drills in schools. Education.

[SIMILAR MATTER FILED IN PREVIOUS SESSION
SEE HOUSE, NO. *610* OF 2023-2024.]

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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

An Act requiring critical incident drills in schools.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:

Notwithstanding any general or special law to the contrary, the superintendent of each school district shall, prior to the beginning of the school year, meet with the fire chief and police chief of the city, town or district to formulate a school specific critical incident plan for each school under the superintendent's supervision. The critical incident plan shall encompass, but not be limited to, procedures for disasters in which serious bodily injury might occur, shootings, terrorist activities and bomb threats.

The plan shall be designed for each school building after a review of each building. The plan shall include, but not be limited to: (1) establishment of a critical incident drill program that incorporates best practices established by the federal Department of Homeland Security; (2) establishment of a crisis response team; (3) a designation as to who is in charge of said team and designated substitutes; (4) a communication plan; (5) crisis procedures for safe entrance to and

exit from the school by students, parents and employees; and (6) policies for enforcing school discipline and maintaining a safe and orderly environment during the incident . Each district, with the assistance of the local police and fire departments, shall annually review and update as appropriate the plan.

At the beginning of each school year, students at each school shall be instructed as to the plan that is developed.

The police chief or a designee shall visit each school at least 2 times each year for the purpose of conducting critical incident drills. These drills shall be conducted without advance warning to the school personnel other than the person in charge of the school at the time.

Joint Committee on Education

Bill Summary

BILL NUMBER	House, No. 740
TITLE	An Act relative to school mascot name changes
SPONSOR(S)	Representative Marcus Vaughn of Wrentham
PRIOR HISTORY	H.605 of the 2023-24 session; sent to study.
CURRENT LAW	MGL 71 pertains to public schools

SUMMARY

Amends MGL 71 by inserting a section after 37R—37S. The section defines "school branding." In the event a school committee wishes to change a school's branding that references any person, group of persons, race, creed, color, national origin, sexual orientation or gender identity, a public hearing must be held. The hearing must have at least 1 person that is a member of the identity the school branding is referencing, and this induvial must be given the opportunity to speak on the branding change. This bill also requires the commissioner of education to adopt rules and regulations to carry out this section.

HOUSE . . . . . No. 740

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PRESENTED BY:

Marcus S. Vaughn

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 school mascot name changes.

PETITION OF:

NAME:	DISTRICT/ADDRESS:	DATE ADDED:
Marcus S. Vaughn	*9th Norfolk*	*1/3/2025*

HOUSE DOCKET, NO. 66 FILED ON: 1/3/2025

HOUSE . . . . . No. 740

By Representative Vaughn of Wrentham, a petition (accompanied by bill, House, No. 740) of Marcus S. Vaughn relative to school mascot name changes. Education.

[SIMILAR MATTER FILED IN PREVIOUS SESSION
SEE HOUSE, NO. *605* OF 2023-2024.]

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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

An Act relative to school mascot name changes.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:

Chapter 71 of the General Laws is hereby amended by inserting after section 37R the following section:-

Section 37S. (a) For the purposes of this section "school branding" shall mean any name, symbol or image used by a school as a mascot, nickname, logo, letterhead, team name, slogan, motto or other identifier.

(b) Prior to any change in school branding where the current school branding references any person, group of persons, organization, race, creed, color, national origin, sexual orientation or gender identity, the school committee for the school district that the school belongs to shall hold a hearing on the proposed school branding change. The hearing shall be open to the public and at least 1 representative of the group, organization or identity referenced in the school

branding shall be in attendance at the hearing and shall be given the opportunity to speak on the proposed school branding change.

(c) The commissioner shall adopt rules and regulations to carry out this section.

OUSE DOCKET, NO. 1518 FILED ON: 1/15/2025

Joint Committee on Education

Bill Summary

BILL NUMBER	House, No. 688
TITLE	An Act relative to public school workplace security
SPONSOR(S)	Representative Sabadosa of Northampton
PRIOR HISTORY	N/A
CURRENT LAW	N/A

SUMMARY

The purpose of this bill is to provide legal protections for educators and staff against unjust, antagonistic, and harmful treatment by school administrators and to establish accountability measures for administrative conduct within Massachusetts public schools. Additionally, this act will ensure that conflicts of interest by school administrators are investigated by the attorney general's office rather than the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

HOUSE . . . . . No. 688

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PRESENTED BY:

***Lindsay N. Sabadosa*, (BY REQUEST)**

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 public school workplace security.

PETITION OF:

NAME:	DISTRICT/ADDRESS:	DATE ADDED:
Benjamin Tobin		*1/15/2025*

HOUSE DOCKET, NO. 1518 FILED ON: 1/15/2025

HOUSE . . . . . No. 688

By Representative Sabadosa of Northampton (by request), a petition (accompanied by bill, House, No. 688) of Benjamin Tobin relative to legal protections for certain educators and school staff. Education.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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

An Act relative to public school workplace security.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:

Section 1: Purpose

The purpose of this bill is to provide legal protections for educators and staff against unjust, antagonistic, and harmful treatment by school administrators and to establish accountability measures for administrative conduct within Massachusetts public schools to ensure that staff. Additionally, this act will ensure that conflicts of interest by school administrators are investigated by the attorney general's office rather than the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

Section 2: Definitions

1. "Educator" refers to any teacher, instructor, or staff member employed in a public school.

2. "Administrator" refers to any individual serving in a managerial capacity within a school or school district.

3. "Vindictive actions" are actions that are retaliatory in nature, aimed at punishing an educator for lawful and ethical conduct. These actions would also fall under the category of bullying, harassment, and retaliation and could include intentionally negative performance reviews to defame the educator, creating a toxic work environment, placing staff in situations that are unethical, harmful, or unsafe, asking staff to perform duties outside of their licensure (ex. moderate disabilities working with severe disabilities and behavior), not providing appropriate training before asking educators to engage in a situation.

Section 3: Provisions

1. Protection Against Retaliation: a. No educator shall be subject to disciplinary action, harassment, or any form of retaliation for reporting misconduct or advocating for educational policies that promote the well-being of students. b. Educators shall have the right to appeal any disciplinary actions taken against them that they believe are the result of vindictive actions by administrators.

2. Establishment of a Review Board: a. A Review Board shall be established within each school district to investigate complaints made by educators against administrators. This board shall be anonymous b. The Review Board shall consist of teachers, administrators, and community representatives to create a balanced perspective on administrative conduct.

3. Accountability Measures: a. Administrators found to engage in retaliatory actions against educators shall face disciplinary measures, which may include suspension or termination of employment and removal of licensure b. An annual report shall be submitted to the state legislature detailing complaints filed, outcomes of investigations, and actions taken against administrators.

4. Attorney General's Office: Complaints against school administrators shall be investigated by the attorney general's office rather than the Department of Education given the Department's clear conflict of interest in investigating their own administrators and their vested interest in ensuring the continuity of administrators. The attorney general shall be given broad powers to investigate and penalize administrators found to have conflicts of interest and or who have engaged in aggressive or unjustly harmful actions against educators.

Section 4: Implementation

This act shall take effect immediately upon passage, and school districts will implement necessary training and awareness programs for both educators and administrators regarding the provisions of this law.

Section 5: Severability

If any provision of this act is found to be invalid, the remaining provisions shall remain in effect.

HOUSE DOCKET, NO. 1905 FILED ON: 1/15/2025

Joint Committee on Education

Bill Summary

BILL NUMBER	House, No. 681
TITLE	An Act relative to combatting violence in schools
SPONSOR(S)	Representative Reyes of Lawrence
PRIOR HISTORY	N/A
CURRENT LAW	MGL Session Law of 2024 Chapter 238, pertains to strengthening Massachusetts' economic leadership, section 219 of which pertains to alterations of MGL 71 (public schools)

SUMMARY

Requires school councils to hold meetings for parents and guardians of K-12 students to discuss their child's wellbeing. These meetings shall be held at least twice a year, the first occurring within the first 12 weeks of the school year and the second within the first 8 weeks after returning from the New Year break. Packets will be provided by the school council to parents/guardians with information on how to manage their child's wellbeing at home and how to spot problematic behavior or signs of declining mental health. DESE will be required to assist school councils with preparing and making the packets available.

HOUSE . . . . . No. 681

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PRESENTED BY:

Estela A. Reyes

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 combating violence in schools.

PETITION OF:

NAME:	DISTRICT/ADDRESS:	DATE ADDED:
Estela A. Reyes	*4th Essex*	*1/15/2025*

HOUSE DOCKET, NO. 1905 FILED ON: 1/15/2025

HOUSE . . . . . No. 681

By Representative Reyes of Lawrence, a petition (accompanied by bill, House, No. 681) of Estela A. Reyes that school councils provide packets and trainings for managing children's wellbeing at home. Education.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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

An Act relative to combating violence in schools.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:

Chapter 71 of the General Laws, as most recently amended by section 219 of chapter 238 of the acts of 2024, is hereby further amended by adding the following section:-

Section 102. (a) School councils established in section 59C shall hold meetings for parents and guardians of students in grades K through 12 to discuss their child's well-being. The timeframe of the meetings shall include, but not be limited to: (i) 1 meeting within the first 12 weeks of the school year and (ii) 1 meeting within the first 8 weeks after the new year break of the school year.

(b) School councils shall provide a packet with information for parents and guardians at the meetings on how to manage their child's wellbeing at home including, but not limited to, information on: (i) spotting depression or aggressive thoughts by a student; and (ii) ways to combat future violence by students. Students shall be provided with a packet to be brought home for parents and guardians during both meeting timeframes in subsection (a).

(c) School councils shall hold in-person trainings for parents and guardians at the meetings on how to manage their child's wellbeing at home.

(d) The department of elementary and secondary education shall assist school councils with preparing and making available the packet and in-person training for parents or guardians on how to manage their child's wellbeing at home.

HOUSE DOCKET, NO. 3474 FILED ON: 1/17/2025

Joint Committee on Education

Bill Summary

BILL NUMBER	House, No. 667
TITLE	An Act relative to school absences
SPONSOR(S)	Representative Peisch of Wellesley
PRIOR HISTORY	N/A
CURRENT LAW	MGL 76 pertains to school attendance

SUMMARY

Enables students participating in national or international competitions sanctioned by a US national governing body to exceed typical school absence limits, provided that they request these absences in advance and maintain a GPA of B or above. The bill allows principals to have discretion over excused absences exceeding seven-day sessions or fourteen half-day sessions within a six-month period.

HOUSE . . . . . No. 667

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PRESENTED BY:

Alice Hanlon Peisch

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 school absences.

PETITION OF:

NAME:	DISTRICT/ADDRESS:	DATE ADDED:
Alice Hanlon Peisch	*14th Norfolk*	*1/17/2025*

HOUSE DOCKET, NO. 3474 FILED ON: 1/17/2025

HOUSE . . . . . No. 667

By Representative Peisch of Wellesley, a petition (accompanied by bill, House, No. 667) of Alice Hanlon Peisch relative to school absences. Education.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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

An Act relative to school absences.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:

Section 1 of chapter 76 of the General Laws, as appearing in the 2022 Official Edition, is hereby amended by inserting after the word "week." in line 30, the following words:-

Absences may also be permitted for students participating in national or international competition sanctioned by a U.S. national governing body as defined in 36 Unities States Code 2205, referred to as the Ted Stevens Act; provided, however, that students seeking approval shall maintain a B grade point average or equivalent in academic courses. The school principal shall have discretion over absences excused exceeding seven-day sessions or fourteen half day session in a period of six months.

HOUSE DOCKET, NO. 3571 FILED ON: 1/17/2025

Joint Committee on Education

Bill Summary

BILL NUMBER	House, No. 647
TITLE	An Act relative to school absences
SPONSOR(S)	Representative McMurtry of Dedham
PRIOR HISTORY	N/A
CURRENT LAW	MGL 69 pertains to the powers and duties of DESE

SUMMARY

Updates the MGL to ensure that no high school day starts prior to 8:30am, and that middle school days do not start prior to 8:00am. Charter schools are included in this mandate, but rural school districts are not. Implementation of this bill will occur no later than July 1, 2028, or the date on which a school district's or charter school's respective bargaining agreement that is operative on January 1, 2026 expires (whichever is later).

HOUSE . . . . . No. 647

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PRESENTED BY:

Paul McMurtry

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 school start times for middle and high school students.

PETITION OF:

NAME:	DISTRICT/ADDRESS:	DATE ADDED:
Paul McMurtry	*11th Norfolk*	*1/17/2025*

HOUSE DOCKET, NO. 3571 FILED ON: 1/17/2025

HOUSE . . . . . No. 647

By Representative McMurtry of Dedham, a petition (accompanied by bill, House, No. 647) of Paul McMurtry relative to school start times for middle and high school students. Education.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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

An Act relative to school start times for middle and high school students.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:

SECTION. 1. Chapter 69 of the General Laws, as appearing in the 2020 Official Edition, is hereby amended by striking out section 1G and inserting in place thereof the following:-

Section 1G. (a) The board shall establish the minimum length for a school day and the minimum number of days in the school year.

(b) (i) The school day for all high schools, including high schools operated as charter schools, shall begin no earlier than 8:30 a.m.

(ii) The school day for all middle schools, including middle schools operated as charter schools, shall begin no earlier than 8:00 a.m.

(iii) For purposes of this section, “school day” has the same meaning as defined by the school district or charter school for purposes of calculating average daily attendance in order to compute any apportionments of state funding.

(iv) The board shall promulgate such rules and regulations as necessary to implement this section in a manner that is fair and equitable.

(v) If the board determines that this section contains costs mandated by the state, reimbursement to local agencies and school districts for those costs shall be made pursuant to chapters 70 and 71.

(vi) This section shall not apply to rural school districts.

SECTION 2. Section 1 shall be implemented by all public schools no later than July 1, 2028, or the date on which a school district's or charter school's respective collective bargaining agreement that is operative on January 1, 2026, expires, whichever is later. Section 1 shall apply to all academic years after July 1, 2028.

HOUSE DOCKET, NO. 1589 FILED ON: 1/15/2025

Joint Committee on Education

Bill Summary

BILL NUMBER	House, No. 638
TITLE	An Act relative to protect library patron privacy
SPONSOR(S)	Representative Livingstone of Boston
PRIOR HISTORY	N/A
CURRENT LAW	MGL 78:7 pertains to establishment by cities and towns; records.

SUMMARY

This bill excludes any record from a public library that reveals the intellectual pursuits of a patron from public record. Access to these records will only be granted with warrant or under exigent circumstances.

HOUSE . . . . . No. 638

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PRESENTED BY:

Jay D. Livingstone

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 protect library patron privacy.

PETITION OF:

NAME:	DISTRICT/ADDRESS:	DATE ADDED:
Jay D. Livingstone	*8th Suffolk*	*1/15/2025*
Lindsay N. Sabadosa	*1st Hampshire*	*2/4/2025*
Adrianne Pusateri Ramos	*14th Essex*	*3/6/2025*

HOUSE DOCKET, NO. 1589 FILED ON: 1/15/2025

HOUSE . . . . . No. 638

By Representative Livingstone of Boston, a petition (accompanied by bill, House, No. 638) of Jay D. Livingstone, Lindsay N. Sabadosa and Adrianne Pusateri Ramos for legislation relative to the privacy of library records. Education.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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

An Act to protect library patron privacy.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:

SECTION 1. Section 7 of chapter 78 of the General Laws is hereby amended by striking the third sentence.

SECTION 2. Said chapter 78 is hereby amended by inserting after section 7 the following section:-

Section 7A.

That part of the records of a public library which reveals the identity and intellectual pursuits of a person using such library shall not be a public record as defined by clause Twenty-sixth of section seven of chapter four. Access to such part of such library records shall be granted only with a warrant issued pursuant to chapter 276 or under exigent circumstances.

HOUSE DOCKET, NO. 2663 FILED ON: 1/16/2025

Joint Committee on Education

Bill Summary

BILL NUMBER	House, No. 591
TITLE	An Act relative to school bullying
SPONSOR(S)	Representative Danielle Gregoire of Marlborough
PRIOR HISTORY	H.3754 of session 2023-2024: Attached to H.4576: Reported favorably to House Ways and Means.
CURRENT LAW	MGL 69:1B pertains to the Board of Elementary and Secondary education; duties. MGL 71:37O pertains to school bullying prohibited; bullying prevention and intervention plans; reporting of bullying incident date

SUMMARY

The bill amends MGL 69:1B by requiring BESE to collect from schools a copy of the updated plan to address bullying when a school updates or creates a plan. The bill amends MGL 71:37O by requiring schools to post the plan on school premises as well on the website, allowing public comment from all interested parties. Once all comments are considered and the plan is finalized, schools will be required to submit the updated plan to BESE within 30 days of completion. Amends MGL 71:37O by giving DESE a two-year time limit to investigate alleged bullying incidents after the incident has occurred.

HOUSE . . . . . No. 591

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PRESENTED BY:

Danielle W. Gregoire

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 school bullying.

PETITION OF:

NAME:	DISTRICT/ADDRESS:	DATE ADDED:
Danielle W. Gregoire	*4th Middlesex*	*1/16/2025*

HOUSE DOCKET, NO. 2663 FILED ON: 1/16/2025

HOUSE . . . . . No. 591

By Representative Gregoire of Marlborough, a petition (accompanied by bill, House, No. 591) of Danielle W. Gregoire relative to school bullying. Education.

[SIMILAR MATTER FILED IN PREVIOUS SESSION
SEE HOUSE, NO. *3754* OF 2023-2024.]

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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

An Act relative to school bullying.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:

SECTION 1. Section 1B of chapter 69 of the General Laws, as appearing in the 2022 Official Edition, is hereby amended by adding the following paragraph:-

The board shall see to it that all schools provide the board with a copy of the updated plan to address bullying prevention and intervention under subsection (d) of section 37O of chapter 71. In the event of noncompliance, the board and the commissioner may use all powers established under this section to ensure schools provide the board with a copy of the updated plan under said subsection (d) of said section 37O.

SECTION 2. Paragraph (1) of subsection (d) of section 37O of chapter 71 of the General Laws, as so appearing , is hereby amended by striking out the third and fourth sentences and inserting in place thereof the following 2 sentences:- The consultation shall include, but not be limited to: (i) notice that shall be posted, with a draft copy of the updated plan, in a conspicuous

place or places on the school's premises and on the school's website; (ii) a public comment period that shall accept written comments on the updated plan, submitted by any interested person, within 30 days of the posted notice; provided, however, that a non-public school shall only be required to give notice to and provide a comment period for families that have a child attending the school; and (iii) if no plan is currently in place, prior to the development of the plan there shall be a public comment period accepting written comments on the development of the original plan, submitted by any interested person and upon completion of the original plan the school shall follow the steps in clauses (i) and (ii). The school shall consider all relevant comments and suggestions before finalizing the plan and subsequent updates to the plan. The plan shall be updated every 2 years and a copy of the updated plan shall be submitted to the board within 30 days of the completed updates.

SECTION 3. Said section 37O of said chapter 71, as so appearing, is hereby further amended by inserting after the word "retaliation", in line 272, the following words:- , including incidents that result in students being suspended or expelled.

SECTION 4. Subsection (n) of said section 37O of said chapter 71, as so appearing, is hereby further amended by striking out the first sentence and inserting in place thereof the following sentence:- The department shall investigate certain alleged incidents of bullying, within a 2 year period of the alleged incidents.

HOUSE DOCKET, NO. 1791 FILED ON: 1/15/2025

Joint Committee on Education

Bill Summary

BILL NUMBER	House, No. 575 / Senate, No. 312
TITLE	An Act prohibiting the use of Native American mascots by public schools in the commonwealth.
SPONSORS	Representative Brandy Fluker-Reid of Boston and Senator Joanne M Comerford (Hampshire, Frankline, Worcester)
PRIOR HISTORY	H.477 of session 2023-2024: Attached to S.245: Reported favorably to Senate ways and means. S.245 of session 2023-2024: Reported favorably to Senate ways and means.
CURRENT LAW	N/A

SUMMARY

Requires DESE to submit to the commission on Indian affairs a list of all schools in the commonwealth athletic team names, logos, and mascots. The commission will identify all the athletic teams' names, logos, or mascots that are associated with native American cultures, and traditions within three months of receiving the list. Requires the commission to submit the list of identified school to DESE who must publish this list on their website. Requires for the commission to submit recommendations on the subject, and for DESE to come into an agreement with all schools on the list with a projected change to their mascot, logo, or athletic team name. The bill prohibits all schools that do not reach an agreement with DESE from receiving education discretionary grants. Prohibits any school that fails to enter an agreement from receiving discretionary state education grants. Prohibits any public school to adopt a new athletic team, name, or mascot with a name that is associated with Native Americans, which becomes effective once the passage of the bills.

HOUSE . . . . . No. 575

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PRESENTED BY:

Brandy Fluker-Reid

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 prohibiting the use of Native American mascots by public schools in the Commonwealth.

PETITION OF:

NAME:	DISTRICT/ADDRESS:	DATE ADDED:
Brandy Fluker-Reid	*12th Suffolk*	*1/15/2025*
Natalie M. Blais	*1st Franklin*	*2/6/2025*
Joanne M. Comerford	*Hampshire, Franklin and Worcester*	*2/6/2025*
Samantha Montaño	*15th Suffolk*	*2/6/2025*
Christine P. Barber	*34th Middlesex*	*2/19/2025*
Mindy Domb	*3rd Hampshire*	*2/24/2025*
James C. Arena-DeRosa	*8th Middlesex*	*2/24/2025*
Michelle L. Badger	*1st Plymouth*	*2/24/2025*
Natalie M. Higgins	*4th Worcester*	*2/24/2025*
Jason M. Lewis	*Fifth Middlesex*	*2/27/2025*
Lindsay N. Sabadosa	*1st Hampshire*	*3/5/2025*
Margaret R. Scarsdale	*1st Middlesex*	*3/5/2025*
Erika Uyterhoeven	*27th Middlesex*	*3/6/2025*
Carmine Lawrence Gentile	*13th Middlesex*	*3/11/2025*
Marjorie C. Decker	*25th Middlesex*	*3/18/2025*
Tara T. Hong	*18th Middlesex*	*3/24/2025*
David Paul Linsky	*5th Middlesex*	*4/1/2025*
Steven Owens	*29th Middlesex*	*4/1/2025*
Mike Connolly	*26th Middlesex*	*4/1/2025*
Homar Gómez	*2nd Hampshire*	*4/1/2025*
Tommy Vitolo	*15th Norfolk*	*4/8/2025*
Adrianne Pusateri Ramos	*14th Essex*	*4/8/2025*

Danillo A. Sena	*37th Middlesex*	*4/16/2025*
Thomas M. Stanley	*9th Middlesex*	*5/27/2025*

HOUSE DOCKET, NO. 1791 FILED ON: 1/15/2025

HOUSE . . . . . No. 575

By Representative Fluker-Reid of Boston, a petition (accompanied by bill, House, No. 575) of Brandy Fluker-Reid and others for legislation to prohibit the use of Native American mascots by public schools. Education.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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

An Act prohibiting the use of Native American mascots by public schools in the Commonwealth.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:

SECTION 1. (a) For purposes of this section, the word "commission" shall mean the commission on Indian Affairs.

Notwithstanding any general or special law to the contrary, the department of elementary and secondary education shall create and submit to the commission a list of all schools in the commonwealth and their athletic team names, logos and mascots. Within 3 months of receiving the list, the commission shall identify schools with athletic team names, logos and mascots that refer to, represent, or are associated with Native Americans, including aspects of Native American cultures and Native American tribes.

(b) The commission shall provide the list of the schools identified by the commission under subsection (a) to the department and shall publish the list on its website.

(c) Schools that are included in the list identified by the commission under subsection (a) shall not purchase or refurbish any uniforms or other materials, including banners, signs,

scoreboards, displays or other materials bearing the athletic team name, logo or mascot until the school reaches an agreement with the department pursuant to subsection (e).

(d) Not later than 1 year after the publication of the list under subsection (b), the commission shall review general issues regarding Native American team names, logos and mascots used in the Commonwealth, and specific concerns with individual schools included on the list identified by the commission. Based on its review, the commission shall submit recommendations to the department on: (i) policies to phase out or ban mascots that name, refer to, represent or are associated with Native Americans, including aspects of Native American cultures and specific Native American tribes; (ii) any specific schools and their team names, logos or mascots; and (iii) ways to increase respect and knowledge of Native American heritage and cultures in schools and across the commonwealth. The department shall also receive comments directly from tribal nation representatives designated by the commission or recognized by the United States.

(e) Not more than 3 months following the receipt of recommendations from the commission pursuant to subsection (d), the department shall develop a memorandum of understanding with each school identified on the list prepared under subsection (a); provided, however, that the department shall utilize the information provided by the commission in its recommendations under subsection (d) during the negotiation; and provided further, that the commission shall solicit comments from tribal nation representatives designated by the commission or recognized by the United States. Not later than 6 months following the beginning of negotiations, each identified school shall enter into a memorandum of understanding with the department concerning the school's use of their athletic team name, logo or mascot. An agreement shall include an implementation timeline not to exceed 3 years for full implementation.

(f) Schools subject to subsection (e) that fail to enter into an agreement or fail to comply with the memorandum of understanding shall not be eligible for discretionary state education grants.

(g) Notwithstanding the provisions of this act, a school may at any time inform the department of its plan to stop or phase out the use of school athletic team names, logos or mascots which name, refer to, represent, or are associated with Native Americans, including aspects of Native American cultures and Native American tribes.

(h) No public school may adopt a new athletic team name, logo or mascot which names, refers to, represents, or is associated with Native Americans, including aspects of Native American cultures and Native American tribes, including, but not limited to, tribes that are recognized by the United States or the Commonwealth.

(i) The department may promulgate regulations to implement this section.

SECTION 2. The list required under subsection (a) of section 1 shall be completed no later than 3 months after the effective date of this act.

SECTION 3. Subsection (h) of section 1 shall be effective upon the passage of this act.

SENATE . . . . . No. 312

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PRESENTED BY:

Joanne M. Comerford

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 prohibiting the use of Native American mascots by public schools in the Commonwealth.

PETITION OF:

NAME:	DISTRICT/ADDRESS:	
Joanne M. Comerford	*Hampshire, Franklin and Worcester*	
Jason M. Lewis	*Fifth Middlesex*	*2/4/2025*
Michael J. Barrett	*Third Middlesex*	*2/5/2025*
James B. Eldridge	*Middlesex and Worcester*	*2/11/2025*
Patricia D. Jehlen	*Second Middlesex*	*2/19/2025*
Sal N. DiDomenico	*Middlesex and Suffolk*	*2/20/2025*
John F. Keenan	*Norfolk and Plymouth*	*2/20/2025*
Rebecca L. Rausch	*Norfolk, Worcester and Middlesex*	*4/4/2025*

SENATE DOCKET, NO. 856 FILED ON: 1/14/2025

SENATE . . . . . No. 312

By Ms. Comerford, a petition (accompanied by bill, Senate, No. 312) of Joanne M. Comerford, Jason M. Lewis, Michael J. Barrett, James B. Eldridge and other members of the Senate for legislation to prohibit the use of Native American mascots by public schools in the Commonwealth. Education.

[SIMILAR MATTER FILED IN PREVIOUS SESSION
SEE SENATE, NO. *245* OF 2023-2024.]

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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

An Act prohibiting the use of Native American mascots by public schools in the Commonwealth.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:

SECTION 1. (a) For purposes of this section, the word "commission" shall mean the commission on Indian Affairs.

Notwithstanding any general or special law to the contrary, the department of elementary and secondary education shall create and submit to the commission a list of all schools in the commonwealth and their athletic team names, logos and mascots. Within 3 months of receiving the list, the commission shall identify schools with athletic team names, logos and mascots that refer to, represent, or are associated with Native Americans, including aspects of Native American cultures and Native American tribes.

(b) The commission shall provide the list of the schools identified by the commission under subsection (a) to the department and shall publish the list on its website.

(c) Schools that are included in the list identified by the commission under subsection (a) shall not purchase or refurbish any uniforms or other materials, including banners, signs, scoreboards, displays or other materials bearing the athletic team name, logo or mascot until the school reaches an agreement with the department pursuant to subsection (e).

(d) Not later than 1 year after the publication of the list under subsection (b), the commission shall review general issues regarding Native American team names, logos and mascots used in the Commonwealth, and specific concerns with individual schools included on the list identified by the commission. Based on its review, the commission shall submit recommendations to the department on: (i) policies to phase out or ban mascots that name, refer to, represent or are associated with Native Americans, including aspects of Native American cultures and specific Native American tribes; (ii) any specific schools and their team names, logos or mascots; and (iii) ways to increase respect and knowledge of Native American heritage and cultures in schools and across the commonwealth. The department shall also receive comments directly from tribal nation representatives designated by the commission or recognized by the United States.

(e) Not more than 3 months following the receipt of recommendations from the commission pursuant to subsection (d), the department shall develop a memorandum of understanding with each school identified on the list prepared under subsection (a); provided, however, that the department shall utilize the information provided by the commission in its recommendations under subsection (d) during the negotiation; and provided further, that the commission shall solicit comments from tribal nation representatives designated by the

commission or recognized by the United States. Not later than 6 months following the beginning of negotiations, each identified school shall enter into a memorandum of understanding with the department concerning the school's use of their athletic team name, logo or mascot. An agreement shall include an implementation timeline not to exceed 3 years for full implementation.

(f) Schools subject to subsection (e) that fail to enter into an agreement or fail to comply with the memorandum of understanding shall not be eligible for discretionary state education grants.

(g) Notwithstanding the provisions of this act, a school may at any time inform the department of its plan to stop or phase out the use of school athletic team names, logos or mascots which name, refer to, represent or are associated with Native Americans, including aspects of Native American cultures and Native American tribes.

(h) No public school may adopt a new athletic team name, logo or mascot which names, refers to, represents or is associated with Native Americans, including aspects of Native American cultures and Native American tribes, including, but not limited to, tribes that are recognized by the United States or the Commonwealth.

(i) The department may promulgate regulations to implement this section.

SECTION 2. The list required under subsection (a) of section 1 shall be completed no later than 3 months after the effective date of this act.

SECTION 3. Subsection (h) of section 1 shall be effective upon the passage of this act.

HOUSE DOCKET, NO. 1437 FILED ON: 1/14/2025

Joint Committee on Education

Bill Summary

BILL NUMBER	House, No. 549
TITLE	An Act relative to regulate the use of mobile communication devices in educational institutions
SPONSOR(S)	Representative DeCoste of Norwell
PRIOR HISTORY	N/A
CURRENT LAW	MGL 69 pertains to the powers and duties of the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

SUMMARY

This bill defines “mobile communication device” and requires DESE to set standards for school districts to prohibit cell phones during instructional hours. The standards ensure students store their phones in designated areas or lockers. This bill includes sections that allow students with medical conditions or other special circumstances to be exempt from these standards and makes room for DESE to allow schools to choose whether cell phones without internet or app access will be prohibited during instructional hours as well.

HOUSE . . . . . No. 549

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PRESENTED BY:

David F. DeCoste

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 regulate the use of mobile communication devices in educational institutions.

PETITION OF:

NAME:	DISTRICT/ADDRESS:	DATE ADDED:
David F. DeCoste	*5th Plymouth*	*1/14/2025*
Geoffrey Gordon		*1/14/2025*

HOUSE DOCKET, NO. 1437 FILED ON: 1/14/2025

HOUSE . . . . . No. 549

By Representative DeCoste of Norwell, a petition (accompanied by bill, House, No. 549) of David F. DeCoste and Geoffrey Gordon for legislation to regulate the use of mobile communication devices in educational institutions. Education.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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

An Act to regulate the use of mobile communication devices in educational institutions.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:

SECTION 1. Chapter 69 of the General Laws, as appearing in the 2022 Official Edition, is hereby amended by inserting after section 37 the following new section:-

Section 38.

(a) For the purposes of this section, "Mobile communication device" shall be defined as to any portable electronic device that enables voice communication, text messaging, internet access, and application usage, including but not limited to smartphones and tablets.

(b) The department shall establish standards for school districts to prohibit the usage of mobile communication devices during instructional hours within all public elementary, secondary, and vocational schools. These standards shall require students store mobile communication devices in designated areas or lockers during school hours to minimize distractions and enhance focus during educational activities. The standards shall not prohibit authorized personnel from using mobile communication devices for official school purposes or

students with documented medical needs or other exceptional circumstances from using mobile communication devices as approved by school administration. The standards shall require ensure schools establish clear communication to students and parents regarding the regulations and any consequences for violations of the school's cell phone policy.

(c) The standards may allow schools to adopt exceptions for cellular phones which do not provide internet access or application usage to its users, so that students may communicate with parents and guardians while minimizing noise and distractions to the learning environment.

SECTION 2. This act shall take effect at the beginning of the next academic year following its passage.

HOUSE DOCKET, NO. 4089 FILED ON: 1/17/2025

Joint Committee on Education

Bill Summary

BILL NUMBER House, No. 548/ Senate, No. 397

TITLE An Act to promote safe firearm storage education and increase the well being of students.

SPONSORS Representative Marjorie Decker of Cambridge, and Senator Jason Lewis (Malden).

PRIOR HISTORY S.305 of 2023-2024 session: Attached to S2663: Reported favorably to SWM

CURRENT LAW MGL 71 pertains to public schools

SUMMARY

Requires DESE to develop a model content of firearms for school districts in order for the districts to disseminate a notice to their school communities, including families, guardians and staff. Requires the model information to be published in English and multiple languages that are representative of the needs of local communities as determined by the department and must be reviewed annually. Requires for the school committee and superintendents for each school district to collaborate on how to annually distribute a notice developed pursuant to this section to the school community.

HOUSE . . . . . No. 548

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PRESENTED BY:

Marjorie C. Decker

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 promote safe firearm storage education and increase the well-being of students.

PETITION OF:

NAME:	DISTRICT/ADDRESS:	DATE ADDED:
Marjorie C. Decker	*25th Middlesex*	*1/17/2025*
Michelle L. Badger	*1st Plymouth*	*1/31/2025*
James C. Arena-DeRosa	*8th Middlesex*	*4/8/2025*
Michelle M. DuBois	*10th Plymouth*	*4/28/2025*
Patrick Joseph Kearney	*4th Plymouth*	*4/28/2025*
Sean Garballey	*23rd Middlesex*	*5/8/2025*
Estela A. Reyes	*4th Essex*	*5/28/2025*

HOUSE DOCKET, NO. 4089 FILED ON: 1/17/2025

HOUSE . . . . . No. 548

By Representative Decker of Cambridge, a petition (accompanied by bill, House, No. 548) of Marjorie C. Decker and Michelle L. Badger relative to firearm storage education. Education.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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

An Act to promote safe firearm storage education and increase the well-being of students.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:

Chapter 71 of the General Laws is hereby amended by adding the following section:-

Section 99. (a) The department shall develop model content for the safe storage of firearms in consultation with the executive office of public safety and security for school districts in order for the districts to disseminate a notice to their school communities, including families, guardians and staff.

(b) The model content for the safe storage of firearms shall include information for the school community regarding: (i) the life-saving importance of secure gun storage in homes and vehicles to protect unsupervised, unauthorized children and teens from accessing firearms with which they may cause harm; (ii) the risks of unsecured firearms to children and teens, schools, and the wider community; (iii) actions everyone in the school community can take to keep our communities safe including raising awareness about secure firearm storage requirements, the safe storage of firearms pursuant to section 131L of chapter 140 , suicide prevention resources as well as other behavioral health or educational resources.

(c) The model content developed by the department shall be published in English and multiple languages that are representative of the needs of local communities as determined by the department. The department shall review the model content annually.

(d) The office of the superintendent and the school committee of each school district shall collaborate and annually distribute a notice developed pursuant to this section to the school community, including parents and guardians who have students enrolled in the school district, and staff, and make said information electronically accessible on the district's webpage.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PRESENTED BY:

Jason M. Lewis

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 promote safe firearm storage education and increase the well-being of students.

PETITION OF:

NAME:	DISTRICT/ADDRESS:	
Jason M. Lewis	*Fifth Middlesex*	
Bruce E. Tarr	*First Essex and Middlesex*	*4/3/2025*

SENATE DOCKET, NO. 1304 FILED ON: 1/16/2025

SENATE . . . . . No. 397

By Mr. Lewis, a petition (accompanied by bill, Senate, No. 397) of Jason M. Lewis for legislation to promote safe firearm storage education and increase the well-being of students. Education.

[SIMILAR MATTER FILED IN PREVIOUS SESSION
SEE SENATE, NO. *305* OF 2023-2024.]

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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

An Act to promote safe firearm storage education and increase the well-being of students.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:

Chapter 71 of the General Laws is hereby amended by adding the following section:-

Section 99. (a) The department shall develop model content for the safe storage of firearms in consultation with the executive office of public safety and security for school districts in order for the districts to disseminate a notice to their school communities, including families, guardians and staff.

(b) The model content for the safe storage of firearms shall include information for the school community regarding: (i) the life-saving importance of secure gun storage in homes and vehicles to protect unsupervised, unauthorized children and teens from accessing firearms with which they may cause harm; (ii) the risks of unsecured firearms to children and teens, schools, and the wider community; (iii) actions everyone in the school community can take to keep our

communities safe including raising awareness about secure firearm storage requirements, the safe storage of firearms pursuant to section 131L of chapter 140 , suicide prevention resources as well as other behavioral health or educational resources.

(c) The model content developed by the department shall be published in English and multiple languages that are representative of the needs of local communities as determined by the department. The department shall review the model content annually.

(d) The office of the superintendent and the school committee of each school district shall collaborate and annually distribute a notice developed pursuant to this section to the school community, including parents and guardians who have students enrolled in the school district, and staff, and make said information electronically accessible on the district's webpage.

HOUSE DOCKET, NO. 3606 FILED ON: 1/17/2025

Joint Committee on Education

Bill Summary

BILL NUMBER	House, No. 516
TITLE	An Act establishing employee screening requirements in school to prevent child sexual abuse
SPONSOR(S)	Representative Natlie Blais of Deerfield
PRIOR HISTORY	H.434 of the 2023-2024 session; sent to study. H.1471 of session 2021-22; referred to committee on the Judiciary; study.
CURRENT LAW	MGL 71 pertains to public schools. MGL 118:51A pertains to reporting of suspected abuse or neglect; mandated reporters; collection of physical evidence; penalties; content of reports; liability; privileged communication. MGL 36:10 pertains to duties of new register as to unrecorded instruments. MGL 66:10 pertains to inspection and copies of public records; requests; written responses; extension of time; fees.
NOTES	Last session this bill was referred to the Judiciary committee and applied and received three reporting date extensions prior to being sent to study. Substantive changes made from previous session. Section (h)(1-2iv) was added which speaks of regulations for substitute staff in public schools.

SUMMARY

Amends MGL 71 by creating a new section—38R ½-- that creates requirements around reviewing the history of potential employees to ensure no employee working with constant contact of students has a history of sexual misconduct or abuse with minors. The statue defines “child abuse”, and “sexual misconduct.” It requires all school districts, charter schools, and nonpublic schools to ensure no history of this misconduct was performed by a potential or active employee, including substitutes, prior to employment. Employers receive information in a form created by DESE from previous employers that states if the employee had ever received any

disciplinary action around misconduct. Requires that a school only use the information received for the purpose of evaluating an applicant's fitness to be hired or for continued employment. It requires DESE to create forms, and rule to be used for these background checks, and gives power to the attorney general to place fines on a school the violates these laws, or intentionally hides information from DESE on employees.

HOUSE . . . . . No. 516

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PRESENTED BY:

Natalie M. Blais

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 establishing employee screening requirements in schools to prevent child sexual abuse.

PETITION OF:

NAME:	DISTRICT/ADDRESS:	DATE ADDED:
Natalie M. Blais	*1st Franklin*	*1/17/2025*
Natalie M. Higgins	*4th Worcester*	*4/10/2025*

HOUSE DOCKET, NO. 3606 FILED ON: 1/17/2025

HOUSE . . . . . No. 516

By Representative Blais of Deerfield, a petition (accompanied by bill, House, No. 516) of Natalie M. Blais for legislation to establish employee screening requirements in schools to prevent child sexual abuse. Education.

[SIMILAR MATTER FILED IN PREVIOUS SESSION
SEE HOUSE, NO. *434* OF 2023-2024.]

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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

An Act establishing employee screening requirements in schools to prevent child sexual abuse.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:

Chapter 71 of the General Laws, as appearing in the 2022 Official Edition, is hereby amended by inserting after Section 38R the following new section:-

Section 38R1/2. Screening of prospective school employees for prior investigations into child abuse or sexual misconduct.

For the purposes of this section, the following definitions shall apply:-

"Child abuse", the non-accidental commission of any act by a caregiver which causes or creates a substantial risk of physical or emotional injury or sexual abuse of a child or student; or the victimization of a child or student through sexual exploitation, regardless if the person responsible is a caretaker.

“Sexual misconduct”, any verbal, nonverbal, written, or electronic communication, or any other act directed toward or with a student that is designed to establish a sexual relationship with the student, including a sexual invitation, dating or soliciting a date, engaging in sexual dialogue, making sexually suggestive comments, self-disclosure or physical exposure of a sexual or erotic nature, and any other sexual, indecent or erotic contact with a student.

(a) A school district, charter school, nonpublic school, or contracted service provider holding a contract with a school district, charter school, or nonpublic school may not offer employment to an applicant who would be employed by or work in a school in a position which involves direct or regular contact with students, unless the school district, charter school, nonpublic school, or contracted service provider requires the applicant to provide: (1) A list, including name, address, telephone number and other relevant contact

information of the applicant, including: (i) Current employer; (ii) All former employers that were school entities;

(iii) All former employers if the applicant was employed in positions that involved direct contact with children.

(2) A written authorization that consents to and authorizes disclosure by the applicant's current and former employers. (3) A written statement of whether the applicant: (i) has been the subject of (A) an abuse or sexual misconduct investigation by any employer, State licensing agency, law enforcement agency, unless the investigation resulted in a finding that the allegations were false or inconclusive; or (B) an investigation of abuse under section 51A of chapter 119 in which the allegations of abuse against the applicant were substantiated by the department of children and families and not subsequently unsubstantiated or overturned on appeal; (ii) has ever been disciplined, discharged, non-renewed, asked to resign from

employment, resigned from or otherwise separated from any employment (A) while allegations of abuse or sexual misconduct were pending or under investigation, unless the investigation resulted in a finding that the allegations were false or inconclusive, or in the case of section 51A of chapter 119, unsubstantiated; or (B) due to an adjudication or findings of abuse or sexual misconduct.; or (iii) has ever had a license, professional license or certificate suspended, surrendered or revoked (A) while allegations of abuse or sexual misconduct were pending or under investigation, unless the investigation resulted in a finding that the allegations were false or inconclusive, or in the case of section 51A of chapter 119, unsubstantiated; or (B) due to adjudicated findings of abuse or sexual misconduct.

(b) Before a school or contracted service provider may offer employment to an applicant who would be employed by or work in a school in a position involving direct or regular contact with children, the school or contracted service provider shall conduct a review of the employment history of the applicant by contacting those employers listed by the applicant and requesting the following information: (1) The dates of employment of the applicant. (2) A statement as to whether the applicant: (i) was the subject of (A) an abuse or sexual misconduct investigation by any employer, State licensing agency, law enforcement agency, unless such investigation resulted in a finding that the allegations were false or inconclusive; or (B) an investigation of abuse under section 51A of chapter 119 in which the allegations of abuse against the applicant were substantiated by the department of children and families and not subsequently unsubstantiated or overturned on appeal; (ii) was disciplined, discharged, non-renewed, asked to resign from employment, resigned from or otherwise separated from any employment (A) while allegations of abuse or sexual misconduct were pending or under investigation, unless the investigation resulted in a finding that the allegations were false or inconclusive or, in the case of section 51A of chapter119, unsubstantiated; or (B) due to an adjudication or findings of abuse or

sexual misconduct; or (iii) has ever had a license, professional license or certificate suspended, surrendered or revoked while allegations of abuse or sexual misconduct were pending or under investigation, or due to adjudicated findings of abuse or sexual misconduct.

(c) Before a school or contracted service provider may offer employment to an applicant who would be employed by or in a school entity in a position involving regular contact with children, the school entity or contracted service provider shall check the eligibility for employment or certification status of the applicant to determine whether the applicant holds valid and active certification appropriate for the position and is otherwise eligible for employment and whether the applicant has been the subject of professional discipline.

(d) Before a school or contracted service provider may offer employment to an applicant who would be employed by or in a school entity in a position involving regular contact with children, the school entity or contracted service provider shall check the Central Registry of the department of children and families. A substantiated finding of physical or sexual abuse of a child shall disqualify that applicant from employment.

(e) An applicant who provides false information or willfully fails to disclose material required information shall be subject to discipline up to, and including, termination or denial of employment and may be subject to professional discipline.

(f) No later than 120 days after receiving a request for information under subsection (b), an employer that has or had an employment relationship with the applicant shall disclose the information requested. The employer shall disclose the information on a standardized form developed by the department of elementary and secondary education.

(g)(1) After reviewing the information initially disclosed under subsection (a)(2) and finding an affirmative response to subsection (a)(2)(i), (ii) or (iii), or disclosed under section (b) and finding an affirmative response to subsection (b)(2)(i), (ii) or (iii), where the prospective employing school or contractor makes a determination to consider the applicant for employment, the school or contractor shall request that former employers provide any additional material information about the matters disclosed. The applicant shall provide written authorization that consents to and authorizes disclosure by the applicant's current and former employers of said additional material information. (2) Former employers shall provide the additional information requested no later than 90 days after the prospective employer's request under this paragraph. (3) Information received under this section shall not be deemed a public record for the purposes of section 10 of chapter 66. (4) A school that receives the information under this subsection shall use the information solely for the purpose of evaluating an applicant's fitness to be hired or for continued employment.

(h) A school or independent contractor may hire an applicant on a provisional basis for no more than 90 days pending the school entity's or independent contractor’s review of information and records received under this section, provided that all of the following are satisfied:

(1) the applicant has provided all of the information and supporting documentation required; (2) the school administrator has no knowledge of information pertaining to the applicant that would disqualify the applicant from employment; and (3) the applicant swears or affirms that the applicant is not disqualified from employment.

(i) A school or contractor may not enter into a collective bargaining agreement, an employment contract, an agreement for resignation or termination, a severance agreement or any

other contract or agreement or take any action that interferes with the operation of section 51A of chapter 119 or appropriate criminal authority. Any provision of an employment contract or agreement for resignation or termination or a severance agreement that is executed, amended or entered into after the effective date of this section and that is contrary to this section shall be void. (1) Any individual who is a school employee, contractor, or agent, or any State educational agency or local educational agency, shall be prohibited from assisting a school employee, contractor, or agent in obtaining a new job in another educational agency or school, apart from the routine transmission of administrative and personnel files, if the individual or agency knows, or has probable cause to believe, that such school employee, contractor, or agent engaged in sexual misconduct regarding a minor or student in violation of the law. (2) The requirements of subsection (a) shall not apply if the information

giving rise to probable cause if : (i) there has been properly reported to a law enforcement agency with jurisdiction over the alleged misconduct; and has been properly reported to any other authorities as required by Federal, State, or local law, including title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (20 U.S.C. 1681 et seq.) and the regulations implementing such title under part 106 of title 34, Code of Federal Regulations, or any succeeding regulations; and (ii) the matter has been officially closed or the prosecutor or police with jurisdiction over the alleged misconduct has investigated the allegations and notified school officials that there is insufficient information to establish probable cause that the school employee, contractor, or agent engaged in sexual misconduct regarding a minor or student in violation of the law; (iii) the school employee, contractor, or agent has been charged with, and acquitted or otherwise exonerated of the alleged misconduct; or (iv) the case or investigation remains open and there have been no charges filed against, or indictment of, the school employee, contractor, or agent within 4 years of the date on which the information was reported to a law enforcement agency.

(v)(A) For substitute employees, the employment history review required by this section shall be required only prior to the initial hiring of a substitute or placement on the school entity's approved substitute list and shall remain valid as long as the substitute continues to be employed by the same school entity or remains on the school entity's approved substitute list. (B) A substitute seeking to be added to another school entity's substitute list shall undergo a new employment history review. The appearance of a substitute on one school entity's substitute list does not relieve another school entity from compliance with this section. (C) An employment history review conducted upon initial hiring of a substitute employee by an contracted service provider, intermediate unit or any other entity that furnishes substitute staffing services to school entities shall satisfy the requirements of this section for all school entities using the services of that independent contractor, intermediate unit or other entity. (D) A contracted service provider, intermediate unit or any other entity furnishing substitute staffing services to school entities shall comply with the provisions of this Act. (E) For purposes of this subsection, "substitute employee" shall not mean school bus drivers employed by a contracted service provider.

(j)(1) For employees of contracted service providers, the employment history review required by this section shall be performed either at the time of the initial hiring of the employee or prior to the assignment of an existing employee to perform work for a school entity in a position involving regular contact with children. The review shall remain valid as long as the employee remains employed by that same contractor even though assigned to perform work for other school entities. (2) A contracted service provider shall maintain records documenting employment history reviews for all employees as required by this section and, upon request, shall provide a school entity for which an employee is assigned to perform work access to the records pertaining to that employee. (3) Prior to assigning an employee to perform work for a school in a position involving regular contact with children, the contracted service provider shall inform the

school of any instance known to the contractor in which the employee: (i) was the subject of any abuse or sexual misconduct investigation by any employer, state licensing agency, law enforcement authority or child protective services agency, unless such investigation resulted in a finding that allegations are false; (ii) has ever been disciplined, discharged, non-renewed, removed from a substitute list, asked to resign from employment, resigned from or otherwise separated from any employment while allegations of abuse or sexual misconduct as described in subparagraph (i) were pending or under investigation, or due to an adjudication or findings of abuse or sexual misconduct; or (iii) has ever had a license, professional license or certificate suspended, surrendered or revoked while allegations of abuse or sexual misconduct were pending or under investigation, or due to an adjudication or findings of abuse or sexual misconduct. (4) The independent contractor may not assign the employee to perform work for the school in a position involving direct contact with children where the school objects to the assignment after being informed of an instance of abuse or sexual misconduct. (5) An applicant who has once undergone the employment history review required and seeks to transfer to or provide services to another school in the same district, diocese or religious judicatory or established and supervised by the same organization shall not be required to obtain additional reports before making such transfer.

(k) (1) An employer, school, school administrator or independent contractor who in good faith provides information or records including personnel records about a current or former employee's job performance and professional conduct to a prospective school employer or to the department of elementary and secondary education shall be immune from criminal and civil liability for the disclosure or any consequences of the disclosure, unless the information or records were provided with the knowledge that they were false or misleading. Such immunity

shall be in addition to and not in limitation of any other immunity provided by law or any absolute or conditional privileges applicable to such disclosures by virtue of the circumstances or

the applicant's consent thereto. (2) Except where the laws of other states prevent the release of the information or records requested, or disclosure is restricted by the terms of a contract entered into prior to the effective date of this section, the willful failure of a former employer, school entity, school administrator or independent contractor to respond or provide the information and records as requested may result in civil penalties, and professional discipline where appropriate. (3) Notwithstanding any provision of law to the contrary, an employer, school, school administrator, independent contractor or applicant shall report and disclose in accordance with this section all relevant information, records and documentation that may otherwise be confidential under section 10 of chapter 66. (4) A school or independent contractor may not hire an applicant who does not provide the information required under subsection (a)(2) for a position involving contact with children. (l) Nothing in this section shall be construed: (1) To prevent a prospective employer from conducting further investigations of prospective employees or from requiring applicants to provide additional background information or authorizations beyond what is required under this section, nor to prevent a former employer from disclosing more information than what is required under this section. (2) To relieve a school, school administrator or independent contractor of its legal responsibility to report suspected incidents of abuse in accordance with the provisions of section 51A of chapter 119 or misconduct by a licensed educator in accordance with the reporting requirements of the department of elementary and secondary education. (3) To relieve a school, school administrator or independent contractor of its legal responsibility to report suspected incidents of professional misconduct in accordance with chapter 119, section 51A or misconduct by a licensed educator in accordance with the reporting requirements of the department of elementary and secondary

education. (4) To prohibit the right of the exclusive representative pursuant to chapter 150E to challenge the validity of an employee's termination or discipline under a collective bargaining agreement or any relevant statute

(m)(1) The office of the attorney general shall have jurisdiction to determine willful violations of this section and may, following a hearing, assess a civil penalty not to exceed ten thousand dollars. School entities shall be barred from contracting with an independent contractor who is found to have willfully violated the provisions of this section. Willful violations of the provisions of this section shall be reported to the relevant licensing authority. (2) Notwithstanding any other provision of law to the contrary, the department of education shall gather data on all reports of sexual misconduct and sexual abuse of students by school employees, including details of the allegations of sexual misconduct and sexual abuse; name of the school filing the report; whether an investigation was conducted and, if not, reasons why; the outcome of any investigation, including whether a license was temporarily or permanently revoked or whether the employee surrendered their license in lieu of an investigation. These aggregated data will be reported to the legislature on an annual basis and a report made available to the public and to the National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and

Certification Clearinghouse or any national databases serving the same purpose. (3) The department of education shall notify each school district and school about the provisions of this act to ensure applicants and employers are aware of their respective rights and responsibilities under this act. The department shall develop standardized forms for applicants and employers to use to comply with the requirements of subsection (a) of this act, as well as any other informational materials that may assist applicants and employers in the implementation of and compliance with this act. (4) The board of education may promulgate regulations for implementation and enforcement of this chapter. Upon release of the proposed regulations, the

board shall file a copy of the regulations with the clerks of the house of representatives and the senate, who shall forward the regulations to the joint committee on education. Within 30 days of the filing, the committee may hold a public hearing and issue a report on the regulations and file the report with the board. The board, pursuant to applicable law, may adopt final regulations making revisions to the proposed regulations as it deems appropriate after consideration of the report and shall file a copy of the final regulations with the chairpersons of the joint committee on education and, not earlier than 30 days after the filing, the board shall file the final regulations with the state secretary. (5) No employer shall be liable for injury, loss of property, personal injury or death caused by an act or omission of a public employee while acting in the scope of the public employee's employment and arising out of the implementation of this chapter. This chapter shall

not be construed as creating or imposing a specific duty of care.

HOUSE DOCKET NO 1797. . . . . No. 507

Joint Committee on Education

Bill Summary

BILL NUMBER	House, No. 507
TITLE	An Act relative to the enforcement of anti-bullying policies in our schools
SPONSOR(S)	Representative Shirley B. Arriaga of Chicopee Senator Pavel M. Payano (First Essex)
PRIOR HISTORY	H3853 of the 2023-2024 session; committee redrafted to H4576, HWM.

CURRENT LAW

MGL 71:37O pertains to school bullying prohibited; bullying preventions and intervention plans; reporting of bullying incident date.

NOTES

It has to be looked into if schools have the capacity to create bullying quarterly reports rather than annual reports.

The pilot program is an unfunded mandate.

SUMMARY

This bill amends MGL 71:37O by requiring the bullying data reports are done quarterly rather than annually. Expanding policies to inform parents on how to report a bullying incident and requiring mandatory counseling to any student involved in a bullying incident at school. Requires DESE to establish an anti-bullying officer pilot programs to help school experiencing significant bullying incidents. The pilot program will include assigning anti-bullying officers to the 5 schools experiencing the most incidents of bullying, based on the quarterly reporting, to help with the schools significant bullying problems. Anti-bullying officers' duties at the school they are assigned to must include: responding, investigating and reporting incidents of bullying at the school.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PRESENTED BY:

Shirley B. Arriaga

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 the enforcement of anti-bullying policies in our schools.

PETITION OF:

NAME:	DISTRICT/ADDRESS:	DATE ADDED:

Shirley B. Arriaga	*8th Hampden*	*1/15/2025*
Mindy Domb	*3rd Hampshire*	*3/4/2025*
Orlando Ramos	*9th Hampden*	*4/9/2025*

HOUSE DOCKET, NO. 1797 FILED ON: 1/15/2025

HOUSE . . . . . No. 507

By Representative Arriaga of Chicopee, a petition (accompanied by bill, House, No. 507) of Shirley B. Arriaga and Mindy Domb for legislation to establish an anti-bullying officer pilot program to assist schools experiencing significant bullying incidents. Education.

[SIMILAR MATTER FILED IN PREVIOUS SESSION
SEE HOUSE, NO. *3853* OF 2023-2024.]

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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

An Act relative to the enforcement of anti-bullying policies in our schools.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:

SECTION 1. Subsection (b) of section 37O of chapter 71 of the General Laws, as appearing in the 2020 Official Edition, is hereby amended by striking out the second paragraph and inserting in place thereof the following paragraph:-

Retaliation against a person who: (i) reports any instance of bullying, (ii) provides information during an investigation of bullying, (iii) witnesses or has reliable information about bullying or (iv) provides bullying incident data in a quarterly report to the department under subsection (k) shall be prohibited.

SECTION 2. Paragraph (2) of subsection (d) of said section 37O of said chapter 71, as so appearing, is hereby amended by striking out clause (x) and inserting in place thereof the following clause:-

(x) mandatory counseling to appropriate services for perpetrators and victims.

SECTION 3. Said subsection (d) of said section 37O of said chapter 71, as so appearing, is hereby further amended by striking out the (5) paragraph and inserting in place thereof the following paragraph:-

(5) The plan shall include provisions for informing parents and guardians about the bullying prevention curriculum of the school district or school and shall include, but not be limited to: (i) how parents and guardians can reinforce the curriculum at home and support the school district or school plan; (ii) the dynamics of bullying; (iii) online safety and cyber-bullying; and (iv) how parents and guardians can report instances of bullying to the school.

SECTION 4. Said section 37O of said chapter 71, as so appearing, is hereby further amended by striking out subsection (f) and inserting in place thereof the following subsection:-

(f) Each school principal or the person who holds a comparable position shall be responsible for: (i) the implementation and oversight of the plan at their school; and (ii) filing the bullying incident data quarterly report, under subsection (k), to the department.

SECTION 5. Subsection (g) of said section 37O of said chapter 71, as so appearing, is hereby amended by inserting after the word “investigation” in line 221, the following words:- and report the instance of bullying or retaliation in the quarterly report to the department under subsection (k).

SECTION 6. Clause (ii) of said subsection (g) of said section 37O of said chapter 71, as so appearing, is hereby amended by inserting after the word “action” in line 225, the following words:- and report in the quarterly report to the department under subsection (k).

SECTION 7. Subsection (h) of said section 37O of said chapter 71, as so appearing, is hereby amended by inserting after the word “action” in line 239, the following words:- and

report the instance of bullying or retaliation in the quarterly report to the department under subsection (k).

SECTION 8. Subsection (k) of said section 37O of said chapter 71, as so appearing, is hereby amended by striking out, in line 267, the word “annually” and inserting in place thereof the following word:- quarterly.

SECTION 9. Said subsection (k) of said section 37O of said chapter 71, as so appearing, is hereby further amended by striking out, in line 270, the word “substantiated” and inserting in place thereof the following word:- any.

SECTION 10. Said subsection (k) of said section 37O of said chapter 71, as so appearing, is hereby further amended by inserting after the word “reported” in line 273, the following words:- by the school principal or the person who holds a comparable position,

SECTION 11. Said subsection (k) of said section 37O of said chapter 71, as so appearing, is hereby further amended by striking out, in lines 280 and 282, the word “annual” and inserting in place thereof, in each instance, the following word:- quarterly.

SECTION 12. Said section 37O of said chapter 71, as so appearing, is hereby further amended by adding the following subsection:-

(o) The department shall establish an anti-bullying officer pilot program to help schools experiencing significant bullying incidents. The program shall assess bullying in schools based on the quarterly reporting of bullying incident data required under subsection (k) and assign anti-bullying officers to the 5 schools experiencing the most incidents of bullying, based on the

quarterly reporting, to help with the schools significant bullying problems. Anti-bullying officers duties at the school they are assigned to shall include, but not be limited to: responding, investigating and reporting incidents of bullying at the school.

SENATE DOCKET, NO. 601 FILED ON: 1/14/2025

SENATE . . . . . No. 445

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PRESENTED BY:

Michael F. Rush

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 parental notification in public schools .

PETITION OF:

NAME:	DISTRICT/ADDRESS:
Michael F. Rush	*Norfolk and Suffolk*

SENATE DOCKET, NO. 808 FILED ON: 1/14/2025

SENATE . . . . . No. 434

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 the enforcement of anti-bullying policies in our schools.

PETITION OF:

NAME:	DISTRICT/ADDRESS:
Pavel M. Payano	*First Essex*

SENATE DOCKET, NO. 808 FILED ON: 1/14/2025

SENATE . . . . . No. 434

By Mr. Payano, a petition (accompanied by bill, Senate, No. 434) of Pavel M. Payano for legislation to establish an anti-bullying officer pilot program to assist schools experiencing significant bullying incidents. Education.

[SIMILAR MATTER FILED IN PREVIOUS SESSION
SEE HOUSE, NO. *3853* OF 2023-2024.]

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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

An Act relative to the enforcement of anti-bullying policies in our schools.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:

SECTION 1. Subsection (b) of section 37O of chapter 71 of the General Laws, as appearing in the 2022 Official Edition, is hereby amended by striking out the second paragraph and inserting in place thereof the following paragraph:-

Retaliation against a person who: (i) reports any instance of bullying, (ii) provides information during an investigation of bullying, (iii) witnesses or has reliable information about bullying or (iv) provides bullying incident data in a quarterly report to the department under subsection (k) shall be prohibited.

SECTION 2. Paragraph (2) of subsection (d) of said section 37O of said chapter 71, as so appearing, is hereby amended by striking out clause (x) and inserting in place thereof the following clause:-

(x) mandatory counseling to appropriate services for perpetrators and victims.

SECTION 3. Said subsection (d) of said section 37O of said chapter 71, as so appearing, is hereby further amended by striking out the (5) paragraph and inserting in place thereof the following paragraph:-

(5) The plan shall include provisions for informing parents and guardians about the bullying prevention curriculum of the school district or school and shall include, but not be limited to: (i) how parents and guardians can reinforce the curriculum at home and support the school district or school plan; (ii) the dynamics of bullying; (iii) online safety and cyber-bullying; and (iv) how parents and guardians can report instances of bullying to the school.

SECTION 4. Said section 37O of said chapter 71, as so appearing, is hereby further amended by striking out subsection (f) and inserting in place thereof the following subsection:-

(f) Each school principal or the person who holds a comparable position shall be responsible for: (i) the implementation and oversight of the plan at their school; and (ii) filing the bullying incident data quarterly report, under subsection (k), to the department.

SECTION 5. Subsection (g) of said section 37O of said chapter 71, as so appearing, is hereby amended by inserting after the word “investigation” in line 221, the following words:- and report the instance of bullying or retaliation in the quarterly report to the department under subsection (k).

SECTION 6. Clause (ii) of said subsection (g) of said section 37O of said chapter 71, as so appearing, is hereby amended by inserting after the word “action” in line 225, the following words:- and report in the quarterly report to the department under subsection (k).

SECTION 7. Subsection (h) of said section 37O of said chapter 71, as so appearing, is hereby amended by inserting after the word “action” in line 239, the following words:- and report the instance of bullying or retaliation in the quarterly report to the department under subsection (k).

SECTION 8. Subsection (k) of said section 37O of said chapter 71, as so appearing, is hereby amended by striking out, in line 267, the word “annually” and inserting in place thereof the following word:- quarterly.

SECTION 9. Said subsection (k) of said section 37O of said chapter 71, as so appearing, is hereby further amended by striking out, in line 270, the word “substantiated” and inserting in place thereof the following word:- any.

SECTION 10. Said subsection (k) of said section 37O of said chapter 71, as so appearing, is hereby further amended by inserting after the word “reported” in line 273, the following words:- by the school principal or the person who holds a comparable position,

SECTION 11. Said subsection (k) of said section 37O of said chapter 71, as so appearing, is hereby further amended by striking out, in lines 280 and 282, the word “annual” and inserting in place thereof, in each instance, the following word:- quarterly.

SECTION 12. Said section 37O of said chapter 71, as so appearing, is hereby further amended by adding the following subsection:-

(o) The department shall establish an anti-bullying officer pilot program to help schools experiencing significant bullying incidents. The program shall assess bullying in schools based on the quarterly reporting of bullying incident data required under subsection (k) and assign anti-bullying officers to the 5 schools experiencing the most incidents of bullying, based on the

quarterly reporting, to help with the schools significant bullying problems. Anti-bullying officers duties at the school they are assigned to shall include, but not be limited to: responding, investigating and reporting incidents of bullying at the school.

SENATE DOCKET, NO. 1543 FILED ON: 1/16/2025

SENATE . . . . . No. 405

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PRESENTED BY:

Joan B. Lovely

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 stopping harm inflicted by the exploitation of life and development.

PETITION OF:

NAME:	DISTRICT/ADDRESS:	
Joan B. Lovely	*Second Essex*	
Michael O. Moore	*Second Worcester*	*1/22/2025*
Joanne M. Comerford	*Hampshire, Franklin and Worcester*	*3/25/2025*
Dylan A. Fernandes	*Plymouth and Barnstable*	*3/27/2025*

SENATE DOCKET, NO. 1543 FILED ON: 1/16/2025

SENATE . . . . . No. 405

By Ms. Lovely, a petition (accompanied by bill, Senate, No. 405) of Joan B. Lovely and Michael O. Moore for legislation to stop harm inflicted by the exploitation of life and development. Education.

[SIMILAR MATTER FILED IN PREVIOUS SESSION
SEE SENATE, NO. *314* OF 2023-2024.]

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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

An Act stopping harm inflicted by the exploitation of life and development.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:

SECTION 1. This act shall be known as the SHIELD Act.

SECTION 2. The General Laws, as appearing in the 2020 Official Edition, are hereby amended by inserting after chapter 119A the following chapter:-

CHAPTER 119B. CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE PREVENTION

Section 1. For the purposes of this chapter, the following words and phrases shall have the following meanings:-

“Abuse”, an act involving a minor that constitutes a sexual offense under the laws of the Commonwealth or any sexual misconduct between an adult and a minor under the care of that individual.

“Abuse prevention policy”, a policy adopted by a school or youth-serving organization that supports the prevention of sexual abuse by outlining a code of conduct for employees that identifies inappropriate behavior between a teacher and a minor or student.

“Age-appropriate”, topics, messages and teaching methods suitable to particular ages or age groups of children and adolescents, based on developing cognitive, emotional, and behavioral capacity typical for the age or age group

“Employee” means a person defined as such in section 148B of chapter 149.

“Job performance” includes, but is not limited to, abilities, attendance, attitude, awards, demotions, disciplinary actions, duties, effort, knowledge, promotions, skills, and. in the case of a former school employee, the reasons for separation.

“Mandated reporter” means a person defined as such in section 21 of chapter 119.

“Minor”, a person under 18 years of age.

“School”, a public or private educational institution that serves minors in the Commonwealth, including an entity with the mission of providing activities and socialization for minors that is operated by such an educational institution.

“Sexual misconduct”, any action directed towards or with a minor, regardless of the age of the minor that is designed to promote a romantic or sexual relationship with the minor. Such acts include, but are not limited to:

(a) Sexual or romantic invitation;

(b) Dating or soliciting dates;

(c) Engaging in sexualized or romantic dialogue;

(d) Making sexually suggestive comments;

(e) Self-disclosure or physical exposure of a sexual, romantic or erotic nature; or

(f) Any sexual, indecent, romantic or erotic contact with a minor or student.

"Youth-serving organization", a public or private entity with the mission of providing activities and socialization for minors; provided, however, that this shall not include such an entity operated by a public or private educational institution that serves minors in the Commonwealth.

Section 2. School Abuse Prevention Policies

(a) Every school shall adopt the abuse prevention policy as set forth by the department elementary and secondary education. The abuse prevention policy shall support the prevention of sexual abuse by outlining a code of conduct for employees that identifies inappropriate behavior for teachers and students. The policy shall also detail the institution's procedures for meeting its obligations under section 51A of chapter 119.

(b) The department of elementary and secondary education, in consultation with the office of the child advocate, the department of children and families and the department of early education and care shall create the abuse prevention policy for schools across the Commonwealth.

(c) The department shall review the model abuse prevention policy at least once every 5 years to ensure it includes up-to-date information and best practices.

Section 3. Youth Serving Organizations Abuse Prevention Policies

(a) Every youth serving organization shall adopt the abuse prevention policy as set forth by the department children and families. The abuse prevention policy shall support the prevention of sexual abuse by outlining a code of conduct for employees that identifies inappropriate behavior for teachers and students. The policy shall also detail the institution's procedures for meeting its obligations under section 51A of chapter 119.

(b) The department of children and families, in consultation with the office of the child advocate, the department of elementary and secondary education and the department of early education and care shall create the abuse prevention policy for schools across the Commonwealth.

(c) The department shall review the model abuse prevention policy at least once every 5 years to ensure it includes up-to-date information and best practices.

Section 4. School Employee Sexual Abuse Prevention Education

(a) All mandated reporters employed by a school shall receive instruction biennially on the prevention, identification, and reporting of child sexual abuse. This instruction shall include comprehensive training and information to help schools and their personnel:

(1) recognize, appropriately respond to and prevent behaviors violating the school abuse prevention policy;

(2) recognize, appropriately respond to, and prevent sexually inappropriate, coercive, or abusive behaviors between minors' served by schools;

(3) identify the ways in which the behavioral and verbal cues for sexual abuse differ from those of other abuse and neglect;

(4) support the healthy development of students and minors, and the building of protective factors, to mitigate against their sexual victimization by adults or by other minors;

(5) respond to disclosures of sexual abuse or reports of behaviors violating the abuse prevention policy of adults or minors in a supportive and appropriate manner that meets mandated reporting requirements under section 51A of chapter 119;

(6) seek out community resources available to assist schools in the prevention, identification, reporting and referral to treatment of cases involving the sexual abuse or exploitation of minors.

(b) The department of elementary and secondary education shall use tested, research-based instructional materials that meet the requirements of subsection (a). The mode of delivery for the trainings may include in-person or e-learning instruction.

(c) The department of elementary and secondary education shall adapt, implement and maintain an existing evidence-based online or in-person training course to satisfy the requirements of subsection (b); provided, however, that if the department cannot find an existing program to adapt to this purpose, then the department shall create, implement, maintain and update such a training program; provided further, that such training program shall be provided to schools at no cost.

(d) For each training required under this section, each school shall maintain records that include the names of the individuals within their school.

(f)The department of elementary and secondary education shall make the abuse prevention policy publicly available on its website.

Section 5. Youth Serving Organization Employee Sexual Abuse Prevention Education

(a) All mandated reporters employed by a youth serving organization shall receive instruction biennially on the prevention, identification, and reporting of child sexual abuse. This instruction shall include comprehensive training and information to help youth serving organizations and their personnel:

(1) recognize, appropriately respond to and prevent behaviors violating the youth serving organization abuse prevention policy;

(2) recognize, appropriately respond to, and prevent sexually inappropriate, coercive, or abusive behaviors between minors' served by youth serving organization;

(3) identify the ways in which the behavioral and verbal cues for sexual abuse differ from those of other abuse and neglect;

(4) support the healthy development of minors, and the building of protective factors, to mitigate against their sexual victimization by adults or by other minors;

(5) respond to disclosures of sexual abuse or reports of behaviors violating the abuse prevention policy of adults or minors in a supportive and appropriate manner that meets mandated reporting requirements under section 51A of chapter 119;

(6) seek out community resources available to assist youth serving organizations in the prevention, identification, reporting and referral to treatment of cases involving the sexual abuse or exploitation of minors.

(b) The department of children and families shall use tested, research-based instructional materials that meet the requirements of subsection (a). The mode of delivery for the trainings may include in-person or e-learning instruction.

(c) The department children and families shall adapt, implement and maintain an existing evidence-based online or in-person training course to satisfy the requirements of subsection (b); provided, however, that if the department cannot find an existing program to adapt to this purpose, then the department shall create, implement, maintain and update such a training program; provided further, that such training program shall be provided to schools and youth-serving organizations at no cost.

(d) For each training required under this section, each youth serving organization shall maintain records that include the names of the individuals within their youth serving organization.

(f)The department of children and families education shall make the abuse prevention policy publicly available on its website.

Section 6. Youth Sexual Abuse Education

(a) Every school that serves elementary or secondary school students and every youth-serving organization shall provide age-appropriate instruction to help students and children served by such schools, programs, or youth-serving organizations:

(1) Recognize and report inappropriate behavior in adults that may indicate that they pose a sexual risk to minors;

(2) Recognize and report inappropriate behaviors in other children that may indicate that they pose a sexual risk to children and youth;

(3) Learn how to develop healthy and respectful interpersonal relationships, including appropriate body boundaries and privacy rules;

(4) Learn how to communicate effectively to trusted adults any concerns they have about body boundaries or privacy violations;

(5) Learn about available school and community resources to prevent and respond to sexual abuse; and

(6) Recognize and understand the consequences of false, inaccurate or exaggerated reports and the importance of children reporting honestly to the best of their ability.

(b) The department of elementary and secondary education shall use tested, research-based instructional materials that meet the requirements of subsection (a) and assist schools in implementing the program. The mode of delivery for the trainings may include in-person or e-learning instruction. For each training required under this section, each school shall maintain records that include the names of the individuals within their school who participated in the training during that year. The department of elementary and secondary education shall make the abuse prevention policy publicly available on its website.

(c) The department of children and families shall use tested, research-based instructional materials that meet the requirements of subsection (a) and assist youth serving organizations in implementing the program. The mode of delivery for the trainings may include in-person or e-learning instruction. For each training required under this section, each youth-serving organization shall maintain records that include the names of the individuals within their program who participated in the training during that year. The department of children and families shall make the abuse prevention policy publicly available on its website.

SENATE DOCKET, NO. 1542 FILED ON: 1/16/2025

SENATE . . . . . No. 404

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PRESENTED BY:

Joan B. Lovely

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 supporting survivors of child sexual abuse.

PETITION OF:

NAME:	DISTRICT/ADDRESS:
Joan B. Lovely	*Second Essex*

SENATE DOCKET, NO. 1542 FILED ON: 1/16/2025

SENATE . . . . . No. 404

By Ms. Lovely, a petition (accompanied by bill, Senate, No. 404) of Joan B. Lovely for legislation relative to supporting survivors of child sexual abuse. Education.

[SIMILAR MATTER FILED IN PREVIOUS SESSION
SEE SENATE, NO. *313* OF 2023-2024.]

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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

An Act relative to supporting survivors of child sexual abuse.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:

SECTION 1. Section 85V of said chapter 231 is hereby amended by inserting after clause (iii) the following clause:-

(iv) a civil action for sexual abuse of a minor, as that term is defined in section 4C½ of chapter 260.

SECTION 2. Section 85W of said chapter 231 is hereby amended by inserting after the word “automobile”, in line 20, the following words:-

or in a civil action for sexual abuse of a minor, as that term is defined in section 4C½ of chapter 260

SECTION 3. Subsection (j) of section 10 of chapter 258 of the General Laws, as appearing in the 2016 Official Edition, is hereby amended by inserting after paragraph (4), the following paragraph:-

(5) any claim by or on behalf of a person who alleges that he was sexually abused as a child, as that term is defined in section 4C of chapter 260.

SECTION 4. Section 2 of chapter 258C of the General Laws, as appearing in the 2016 Official Edition, is hereby amended by inserting after subsection (b), the following subsection:-

(b1) In the case of a claimant who was sexually abused as a minor, such good cause shall include the report of a duly licensed mental health professional stating an opinion that the claimant did not make the connection between the sexual abuse and the harm suffered by the claimant at the time the abuse occurred, and that claimant's failure to make the connection was consistent with the typical responses by such victims of childhood sexual abuse.

SECTION 5. Subsection (a) of section 5 of said chapter 258C is hereby amended by inserting after section paragraph (1) the following paragraph:-

(1A) In the case of a claimant who was sexually abused as a minor, said three years shall commence to run when the claimant first makes the connection between the sexual abuse and the harm suffered by the claimant as a result. The report of a duly licensed mental health professional stating an opinion as to the date when the claimant first made the connection between the sexual abuse and the harm suffered by the claimant, and that the claimant's failure to make the connection prior to that date was consistent with the typical responses by such victims of childhood sexual abuse, shall be prima facie evidence in all proceedings under this chapter.

SENATE DOCKET, NO. 1699 FILED ON: 1/16/2025

SENATE . . . . . No. 387

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PRESENTED BY:

Robyn K. Kennedy

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 safer schools.

PETITION OF:

NAME:	DISTRICT/ADDRESS:
Robyn K. Kennedy	*First Worcester*

SENATE DOCKET, NO. 1699 FILED ON: 1/16/2025

SENATE . . . . . No. 387

By Ms. Kennedy, a petition (accompanied by bill, Senate, No. 387) of Robyn K. Kennedy for legislation relative to safer schools. Education.

[SIMILAR MATTER FILED IN PREVIOUS SESSION
SEE SENATE, NO. *300* OF 2023-2024.]

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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

An Act relative to safer schools.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:

SECTION 1. Section 37P of chapter 71 of the general laws, as appearing in the 2022 Official Edition, is hereby amended by striking out, in lines 84 through 89, the fifth paragraph of subsection (b) and inserting the following words:-

The model memorandum of understanding shall expressly state that school resource officers, and any special service officers appointed to the school district, shall not: (i) serve as school disciplinarians, enforcers of school regulations or in place of licensed school psychologists, psychiatrists or counselors; and (ii) use police powers to address traditional school discipline issues, including non-violent disruptive behavior. The guiding principle for involving a school resource officer in a school-related matter is whether conduct rises to the level of criminal and delinquent conduct that (1) poses substantial harm to the physical well-being of another person or (2) is willful and malicious and causes substantial harm to the property of the

school or (3) constitutes the taking of property of substantial value belonging to another with intent to permanently deprive the property owner of the property. The school resource officer's response to the school-related matter shall be guided by the techniques, including de-escalation and anti-bias training, required for certification as a school resource officer under section 116H of chapter 6.

SECTION 2. Said section 37P of said chapter 71, as so appearing, is hereby further amended by striking out, in lines 121 through 140, the first paragraph of subsection (d) and inserting in its place the following words:

(d) For the purpose of fostering a safe and healthy environment for all students through strategic and appropriate use of law enforcement resources and to achieve positive outcomes for youth and public safety, a chief of police, at the request of the superintendent and subject to approval from the department of elementary and secondary education and to appropriation, shall assign at least 1 school resource officer to serve the city, town, commonwealth charter school, regional school district or county agricultural school. In the case of a regional school district, commonwealth charter school or county agriculture school, the chief of police of the city or town in which the school is located shall, at the request of the superintendent and subject to approval from the department of elementary and secondary education, assign the school resource officer who may be the same officer for all schools in the city or town. Annually, not later than July 16, the superintendent shall report to the department of elementary and secondary education and publicly present to the relevant school committee: (i) the cost to the school district of the assigned school resource officers, any special service officers appointed to the school district, and any security staff; (ii) a description of the proposed budget for mental, social or emotional health support personnel for the school; and (iii) the number of school-based arrests, citations, and court referrals, applications for criminal or delinquency complaints, field interviews,

searches and seizures made of students and any other interactions between students and officers resulting in student disciplinary action or diversion made in the previous year, disaggregated as required by the department of elementary and secondary education. The superintendent shall also report and publicly present the number of school-related reports entered into the local law enforcement agency's computer system, and the number of school-related reports shared with other law enforcement agencies, including via the Boston Regional Information Center and other federal fusion centers. The superintendent will ensure that the district collaborates with the local law enforcement agency in compiling the data for submission in accordance with requirements of the department of elementary and secondary education. A district's data submissions shall accurately reflect the school-related incident data maintained by the local law enforcement agency. A superintendent's failure to provide and publicly present the data as described above shall bar the department of elementary and secondary education's approval of the assignment of any school resource officer(s), or appointment of any other special service officers to the school district, unless and until such data is provided and publicly presented to the department of elementary and secondary education and relevant school committee, mayor, city council, and board of aldermen.

SECTION 3. Said section 37P of said chapter 71, as so appearing, is hereby further amended by striking out, in lines 219 and 220, the words "school-based arrests, citations and court referrals of students" and inserting in place thereof the following words:-

the data described in subsection (d) above and shall make such report available for public review. The department and the executive office of public safety and security, in consultation with the model school resource officer memorandum of understanding review commission, shall jointly develop and disseminate guidance to school districts and local law enforcement agencies on how to compile these data.

SECTION 4. Said Chapter 71 is hereby further amended by inserting after section 37R the following new section:-

Section 37S. (a) As used in this section the following words shall, unless the context clearly requires otherwise, have the following meanings:-

"Holistic school health and safety practices", practices that: a) have been shown to strengthen positive relationships and communication between students and adults; b) contribute to building a school-wide culture that is affirming and embracing of the diversity of cultural, linguistic, and racial backgrounds of enrolled students and their families; c) support non-disciplinary strategies of resolving conflicts with students; and d) are effective without unnecessary reliance on school exclusion or referral to law enforcement.

"School-based security personnel", school resource officers, special service officers appointed by local law enforcement agencies at the request of other departments of their cities, other law enforcement agents, or security guards who are assigned to the premises of a school or district, whether or not they are employed directly by the school or the district seeking such grants. For the purposes of this section, district-level staff who oversee a school district's safety operations are not considered "school-based security personnel."

(b) The board of elementary and secondary education shall, subject to appropriation, make one- or two-year grants to public school districts and/or individual public schools, including regional school districts and charter schools, for the cost of transitioning to, and/or implementing, holistic school health and safety practices that do not include law enforcement presence. Such practices shall include all practices listed under the definition of "holistic school health and safety practices" listed in Section 375(a), as well as, but not limited to:

(1) The creation of advisory groups that enable students to meet regularly with a school staff member and a group of their peers, and other practices or adjustments to student and staff schedules that create space for relationship building;

(2) Practices that support the creation of healthy relationships and counter sexual harassment, sexual assault, and harassment based on other identities, including race, gender, sexual orientation, and religion;

(3) Restorative justice, and related practices shown to resolve and reduce conflict among students and/or between students and staff; and

(4) Staffing students' arrival, dismissal, and other transition periods with adults with ties to students' communities who are skilled at engaging youth and deescalating conflicts.

Nothing in this section shall prohibit a school from contacting law enforcement in an emergency.

(c) The following costs shall be eligible uses of such grants:

(1) Identifying and implementing holistic school health and safety practices;

(2) Hiring and training staff to implement holistic school health and safety practices, including licensed clinical social workers;

(3) Supporting and/or creating school safety teams that include parents, students, teachers, emergency responders, and community to develop or modify the individual school safety plans described above;

(4) Providing information and training to members of the school community, including students and parents, on the school safety plans and holistic school health and safety practices described above;

(5) Documenting and/or evaluating the impact of the grant, and,

(6) Identifying ways to allocate the cost savings of not placing police or other security personnel in schools, including continuation of holistic school health and safety practices upon completion of such grants.

The purchase of metal detectors, weapons, or surveillance technology, or the hiring or employment of school-based security personnel is not an eligible use of such grant funds, nor shall such purchases or hiring be made with other sources of funding during the grant term.

(d) A school or district is eligible to apply for such a grant whether or not it had previously staffed any school-based security personnel, including school resource officers as defined in section 37P of chapter 71. However, a school or district is not eligible to receive such a grant if it intends to continue staffing any school-based security personnel beyond the transition allowed in the first year of such grant. Among grant applicants, schools and districts with higher percentages of low-income students will be given a competitive preference for award of such a grant.

The department of elementary and secondary education shall establish application requirements for such grants. Such applications must include the prior three years' worth of data on school-based policing pursuant to section 37P of chapter 71, as well as the cost to the school and/or district of employing or assigning school-based security personnel and the sources of funding used to do so. The department shall also establish reporting requirements for grant

recipients to evaluate the impact of the grant on school safety, including data on school-based policing as described above.

(e) The department shall serve as a repository for information on holistic school health and safety practices at use in the Commonwealth and elsewhere. To support grantees in implementing, evaluating, and/or replicating holistic school health and safety practices, the department shall establish a community of practice for grantees and other interested schools and districts to share best practices.

SENATE DOCKET, NO. 2140 FILED ON: 1/17/2025

SENATE . . . . . No. 324

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PRESENTED BY:

Brendan P. Crighton

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 promoting racially integrated schools.

PETITION OF:

NAME:	DISTRICT/ADDRESS:
Brendan P. Crighton	*Third Essex*

SENATE DOCKET, NO. 2140 FILED ON: 1/17/2025

SENATE . . . . . No. 324

By Mr. Crighton, a petition (accompanied by bill, Senate, No. 324) of Brendan P. Crighton for legislation to promote racially integrated schools. Education.

[SIMILAR MATTER FILED IN PREVIOUS SESSION
SEE SENATE, NO. *252* OF 2023-2024.]

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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

An Act promoting racially integrated schools.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:

Chapter 69 of the General Laws is hereby amended by inserting after section 36 the following sections:-

SECTION 37.

SCHOOL SEGREGATION DATA COLLECTION

(a) As used in this section, the following words shall have the following meanings:-

"Diverse school", a school in which no single racial subgroup of students accounts for more than 70 per cent of the total student population and at least 25 per cent of the student population is White.

"Diverse district", a school district in which no single racial subgroup of students accounts for more than 70 per cent of the total student population and at least 25 per cent of the student population is White.

"Intensely segregated district", a school district in which (i) a single racial subgroup accounts for 90 per cent or more of the student population; or (ii) 10 per cent or less of the student population is White.

"Intensely segregated school", a school in which (i) a single racial subgroup accounts for 90 per cent or more of the student population; or (ii) 10 per cent or less of the student population is White.

"Racially disproportionate school", a school in which (i) the White student population differs by at least 15 percentage points as compared to the percentage of White students in the district which the school is a part of; or (ii) a school in which less than 25 per cent of the school population is White and the student population of a racial subgroup differs by at least 15 percentage points as compared to the percentage of said racial subgroup in the district of which the school is a part.

"Segregated district", a school district that does not meet the criteria of either a diverse district or an intensely segregated district.

"Segregated school", a school that does not meet the criteria of either a diverse school or intensely segregated school.

(b) Annually, the department of elementary and secondary education shall publicly report and place on its website the following information for all public schools and districts within the commonwealth:

(1) An identification of a public school as a: (i) diverse school; (ii) segregated school; or (iii) intensely segregated school.

(2) A quantifiable, comparable measure of school-level segregation used to determine the category of each school as specified in paragraph (1) of this subsection.

(3) An identification of a public school districts as a: (i) diverse district; (ii) segregated district; or (iii) intensely segregated district.

(4) A quantifiable, comparable measure of district-level segregation used to determine the category of each school as specified in paragraph (3) of this subsection.

(5) An identification of whether a school is a racially disproportionate school.

(6) A quantifiable, comparable measure of intradistrict segregation used to determine whether a school is a racially disproportionate school as specified in paragraph (5) of this subsection.

(7) A quantifiable, comparable measure to compare the proportionality of the racial composition of the total student population of a school or district as compared to the racial composition of students in said school or district that completed the SAT or ACT.

(8) A quantifiable, comparable measure to compare the proportionality of the racial composition of the total population of a school or district as compared to the racial composition of students enrolled in: (i) not less than 1 advanced placement course; (ii) a chemistry course; (iii) a biology course; (iv) a geometry course; (v) a calculus course; (vi) an eighth grade algebra course; (vii) an advanced math course; (viii) a gifted and talented program; and (ix) if applicable, a designated early college pathway.

(c) The department of elementary and secondary education may establish reasonable limits on public reporting of data for the sole purposes of (i) protecting the identities of individual students or (ii) to maintain the statistical integrity of data, provided that such limits are consistent with the existing policies and procedures of the department.

SECTION 38.

SCHOOL INTEGRATION GRANT PROGRAM

The department of elementary and secondary education shall establish a grant program, subject to appropriation, to be known as the school diversity and integration grant program for the development, implementation, and evaluation of comprehensive strategies in school districts to combat the effects of racial segregation by increasing racial diversity of the student population.

(a) As used in this section, the following words shall have the following meanings:-

“Eligible entity”, a public school district or consortium of public school districts in a region that at the time of the application has significant achievement gaps or racial segregation within or between the school districts served by such entity.

(b) The department of elementary and secondary education may reserve up to 10 per cent of appropriated funds for (i) research, development, data collection, monitoring, technical assistance, evaluation, or dissemination activities; (ii) the development and dissemination of best practices to increase racial diversity in schools; and (iii) in the case in which a grantee uses race as a factor in developing a process for achieving racially integrated schools, technical assistance to grantees to develop narrowly tailored plans to achieve the benefits of racial diversity.

(c) The department shall award grants on a competitive basis to eligible entities to develop or implement plans to improve student diversity and reduce or eliminate racial segregation. The department may, in any fiscal year, award: (i) planning grants; (ii) implementation grants; or (iii) both planning and implementation grants.

(1) A planning grant awarded under this section shall be for a period of not more than 1 year.

(2) Each eligible entity that receives a planning grant shall use the grant to support students in schools through the following activities: (i) completing a comprehensive assessment of, with respect to the geographic area served, (A) the educational outcomes and racial segregation of children attending schools; (B) an analysis of the location and capacity of program and school facilities and the adequacy of local or regional transportation infrastructure; and (C) an analysis of whether the local housing stock is adequately diverse and whether local land-use and zoning practices allow for racial diversity; (ii) developing and implementing a robust family, student, and community engagement plan, including public hearings or other open forums that would precede and inform the development of a formal strategy to improve diversity in schools; provided, however, that such engagement shall include meaningful engagement of students and families of color; (iii) developing options, including timelines and cost estimates, for improving diversity in schools, such as weighted lotteries, revised feeder patterns, school boundary redesign, or regional coordination; (iv) developing an implementation plan based on community preferences among the options developed; (v) building the capacity to collect and analyze data that provide information for transparency, continuous improvement, and evaluation; (vi) developing plans for creating a racially inclusive school climate with respect to racially and culturally curriculum, school discipline policies and practices, and teacher and school leader diversity; (vii) if applicable, developing an implementation plan to comply with a court-ordered

school desegregation plan; and (viii) if applicable, developing an implementation plan to replace entrance exams or other competitive application procedures with alternate methods of student assignment to promote racial diversity.

(3) An implementation grant awarded under this section shall be for a period of not more than 3 years, except that the department may extend an implementation grant for an additional 2-year period if the eligible entity receiving the grant demonstrates to the department that the eligible entity is making significant progress, as determined by the department, on the program performance measures described in subsection (g).

(4) Each eligible entity that receives an implementation grant shall implement a high-quality plan to support students in schools that includes: (i) a comprehensive set of strategies designed to improve academic outcomes for all students, particularly students of color, by increasing student diversity; (ii) evidence of strong family and community support for such strategies, including evidence that the eligible entity has engaged in meaningful family and community outreach activities with students and families of color; (iii) goals to increase student diversity; (iv) collection and analysis of data to provide transparency and support continuous improvement; and (v) a rigorous method of evaluation of the effectiveness of the program.

(5) Each eligible entity that receives an implementation grant may use the grant to carry out one or more of the following activities: (i) recruiting, hiring, or training additional teachers, administrators, school counselors, and other instructional and support staff in new, expanded, or restructured schools, or other professional development activities for staff and administrators; provided, however, that the hiring of such individuals directly relate to the implementation of a school integration program under this section; (ii) investing in specialized academic programs or facilities designed to encourage inter-district school attendance patterns; (iii) developing or

initiating a transportation plan for bringing students to and from schools; (iv) developing innovative and equitable school assignment plans; (v) carrying out innovative activities designed to increase racial diversity and engagement between children from different racial backgrounds; (vi) creating or improving systems and partnerships to create an enrollment process for students with multiple public school options, including making school information and data more accessible and easy to understand, in order to ensure access to high-quality schools for students of color and to promote racial diversity; or (vii) carrying out plans to improve access to a rigorous curriculum for all students through the elimination of tracking or ability grouping students in class assignment.

(d) The department shall award grants based on: (i) the quality of the application submitted by an eligible entity; (ii) the likelihood, as determined by the department, that the eligible entity will use the grant to improving academic and other developmental or noncognitive outcomes for students; and (iii) the likelihood that the grant will lead to a meaningful reduction in racial segregation for students.

(e) In awarding grants under this section, the department shall give priority to the following eligible entities: (i) first, to an eligible entity that proposes to use the grant to support a program that extends beyond one school district, such as an inter-district or regional program; and (ii) second, to an eligible entity that demonstrates meaningful coordination with local or regional housing or transportation agencies.

(f) In order to receive a grant, an eligible entity shall submit an application to the department at such time and in such manner as the department may require. Such application shall include: (i) a description of the program for which the eligible entity is seeking a grant, including: (A) how the eligible entity proposes to use the grant to improve the academic and life

outcomes of students in racially segregated schools by supporting interventions that increase diversity for students in such schools; (B) in the case of an implementation grant, the implementation grant plan described in paragraph (4) of subsection (c); and (C) evidence, or if such evidence is not available, a rationale based on current research, regarding how the program will increase diversity; (ii) how the eligible entity will identify and define racial segregation and racial diversity; (iii) a description of the plan of the eligible entity for continuing the program after the grant period ends; (iv) a description of how the eligible entity will assess, monitor, and evaluate the impact of the activities funded under the grant on student achievement and student enrollment diversity; (v) an assurance that the eligible entity has conducted, or will conduct, robust family and community engagement, provided that engagement: (A) shall be in a language that families and students can understand; (B) shall include engagement with students and families of color in the targeted district or region; and (C); shall be designed to remove barriers to ensure participation of students and families in the planning and development of any formal strategy to increase diversity; (vi) an estimate of the number of students that the eligible entity plans to serve under the program and the number of students to be served through additional expansion of the program after the grant period ends; (vii) an assurance that the eligible entity will: (A) cooperate with the department in evaluating the program; and (B) engage in a community of practice as described in subsection (i); (ix) in the case of an eligible entity applying for an implementation grant, a description of how the eligible entity will implement, replicate, or expand a strategy based on an appropriate level of evidence, as determined by the department, or test a promising strategy to increase diversity in schools; (x) in the case of an application by a consortium of local educational agencies, how the grant funds will be divided among the school districts served by such consortium.

(g) The department shall establish performance measures for the programs and activities carried out through grants. These measures shall track the progress of each eligible entity in (i) increasing diversity and decreasing racial segregation in schools; and (ii) improving academic and other developmental or noncognitive outcomes for each racial subgroup of students that the department or eligible entity may identify.

(h) The department may establish annual reporting requirements of grantees as it deems appropriate for the implementation of this section.

(i) The department shall establish a professional learning community, which shall consist of grantees and staff that the department may reasonably furnish for technical assistance in developing strategies related to the purposes of this grant program.

(1) The professional learning community shall meet regularly to promote the development of shared best practices for the planning and implementation of grants under this section.

HOUSE DOCKET, NO. 442 FILED ON: 1/9/2025

Joint Committee on Education

Bill Summary

BILL NUMBER	House, No. 715
TITLE	An Act relative to phone-free schools
SPONSOR(S)	Representative Tarsky of Needham
PRIOR HISTORY	N/A
CURRENT LAW	MGL 71 pertains to public schools

SUMMARY

This bill implements a pouch system in schools for phone storage. Each school district shall enforce this pouch system which will require all students, except those who are deemed exempt by teaching or administrative staff, to store their phones in designated pouches. These pouches will be locked at the beginning of the school day until the end of the school day.

HOUSE . . . . . No. 715

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PRESENTED BY:

Joshua Tarsky

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 phone-free schools.

PETITION OF:

NAME:	DISTRICT/ADDRESS:	DATE ADDED:
Joshua Tarsky	*13th Norfolk*	*1/9/2025*

HOUSE DOCKET, NO. 442 FILED ON: 1/9/2025

HOUSE . . . . . No. 715

By Representative Tarsky of Needham, a petition (accompanied by bill, House, No. 715) of Joshua Tarsky for legislation to prohibit the use of personal electronic devices by students during the school day. Education.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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

An Act relative to phone-free schools.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:

Chapter 71 of the General Laws is hereby amended by adding the following section:-

Section 102. (a) For the purposes of this section, the following terms shall, unless the context clearly requires otherwise, have the following meanings:-

"Personal electronic device", a cell telephone, tablet, smart watch, computer or other portable electronic device capable of voice communication, text messaging or internet access.

"Pouch system", a system in which access to a personal electronic device is restricted through storing the device in a pouch, which can be locked or unlocked at certain times and locations by the school's teaching or administrative staff.

(b) Each school district shall implement a pouch system to prohibit the use of personal electronic devices by students during the school day.

(c) Each school district shall implement a policy for the use of the pouch system. The policy shall permit the use of personal electronic devices if authorized by teaching or administrative staff. The policy shall require that students secure their personal electronic devices in a pouch upon entrance to the school and that each pouch is unlocked at the end of the school day.

(c) Annually, the school district shall submit its policies to the department for review and approval. The department shall promulgate regulations, pursuant to chapter 30A, which shall include minimum requirements for the school districts' policies.

HOUSE DOCKET, NO. 3823 FILED ON: 1/17/2025

Joint Committee on Education

Bill Summary

BILL NUMBER	House, No. 696
TITLE	An Act to expand the use of career and academic plans.
SPONSOR(S)	Representative Scanlon of North Attleborough
PRIOR HISTORY	N/A
CURRENT LAW	N/A

SUMMARY

This bill establishes a special commission to study and make recommendations to the Education Committee and DESE regarding the presence of students' phones in schools and classrooms and their effects on educational outcomes and mental health.

HOUSE . . . . . No. 696

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PRESENTED BY:

Adam J. Scanlon

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 establishing a commission regarding phones in schools.

PETITION OF:

NAME:	DISTRICT/ADDRESS:	DATE ADDED:
Adam J. Scanlon	*14th Bristol*	*1/17/2025*

HOUSE DOCKET, NO. 3823 FILED ON: 1/17/2025

HOUSE . . . . . No. 696

By Representative Scanlon of North Attleborough, a petition (accompanied by bill, House, No. 696) of Adam J. Scanlon for an investigation by a special commission (including members of the General Court) relative to the presence of students' phones in schools and classrooms and their effect on educational outcomes and student mental health. Education.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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

An Act establishing a commission regarding phones in schools.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:

SECTION 1. There shall be a commission to study and make recommendations to the Joint Committee on Education and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education regarding the presence of students' phones in schools and classrooms and their effect on educational outcomes and student mental health.

SECTION 2. The commission shall consist of 2 members appointed by the senate president, 1 of whom shall be the senate chair of the joint committee on education, and 1 of whom shall serve as co-chair of the commission; 2 members appointed by the speaker of the house of representatives, 1 of whom shall be the house chair of the joint committee on education, and 1 of whom shall serve as co-chair of the commission; 1 member appointed by the minority leader of the senate; 1 member appointed by the minority leader of the house of representatives; the secretary of education or a designee; the commissioner of elementary and secondary education or a designee; 2 members appointed by the governor, 1 of whom shall be an expert on

developmental psychology and mental health, and 1 of whom shall be an expert on education and the science of learning; and 1 person appointed from each of the following organizations: the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents, Inc.; the Massachusetts Association of School Committees, Inc.; the Massachusetts Teachers Association; the American Federation of Teachers, Massachusetts; the Massachusetts PTA; the Digital Wellness Lab at Boston Children's Hospital.

SECTION 3. The commission shall investigate the effects of the presence of students' phones in schools, including their effects on student learning and student mental health and development, and a review of current policies across districts and schools in the Commonwealth, and make recommendations regarding policies for schools, school districts, and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. These recommendations shall include:

(i) whether students should be prohibited from using their phones from the start of the school day to the end of the school day, or whether this prohibition shall exclude any particular periods such as lunch or recess;

(ii) whether school policy shall be that students may keep their phones in their bags or whether they must be kept in a locker or some other place during the school day;

(iii) whether such policies should be promulgated at the state level and binding on school districts, or whether such policies should be promulgated at the state level with incentives to local and regional districts to adopt them, or whether such policies should be promulgated at the state level as model policies, or whether such policies should be promulgated at the district level;

(iv) whether any other technology or tools should be used in the course of implementing a policy regarding phones in schools;

(v) whether the Commonwealth or individual districts should pursue any public or private funding to finance any such policies.

SECTION 4. The commission shall report to the joint committee on education and to the department of elementary and secondary education its findings and recommendations on or before January 1, 2026.

HOUSE DOCKET, NO. 3108 FILED ON: 1/16/2025

Joint Committee on Education

Bill Summary

BILL NUMBER	House, No. 574
TITLE	An Act relative to the use of mobile devices in public school districts
SPONSOR(S)	Representative Fiola of Fall River
PRIOR HISTORY	N/A
CURRENT LAW	MGL 71 pertains to public schools

SUMMARY

This bill prohibits the use of personal electronic devices by students during the school day, with some exceptions. Requires DESE to establish model policies to enforce this prohibition, with specific criteria, and make rules that set up a grant program to assist schools with purchasing necessary lock-boxes or other equipment needed to implement policies.

HOUSE . . . . . No. 574

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PRESENTED BY:

Carole A. Fiola

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 the use of mobile devices in public school districts.

PETITION OF:

NAME:	DISTRICT/ADDRESS:	DATE ADDED:
Carole A. Fiola	*6th Bristol*	*1/16/2025*
Patrick Joseph Kearney	*4th Plymouth*	*1/17/2025*

HOUSE DOCKET, NO. 3108 FILED ON: 1/16/2025

HOUSE . . . . . No. 574

By Representative Fiola of Fall River, a petition (accompanied by bill, House, No. 574) of Carole A. Fiola and Patrick Joseph Kearney that the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education be authorized to establish a policy that provides for when a student's use of a student's cellphone. Education.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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

An Act relative to the use of mobile devices in public school districts.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:

SECTION 1. Chapter 71 of the General Laws is hereby amended by inserting after section 99 the following new section:

Section 100. Restrictions on the use of mobile electronic devices.

(1) For the purposes of this section, the following words shall have the following meanings, unless the context clearly requires otherwise.

"Department", the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

"Emerging technology", any other device that has or be able to act in place of or as an extension of an individual's cellphone. "Emerging technology" shall not include school-provided or required devices.

"Mobile electronic device", any hand-held or other portable electronic equipment capable of providing data or voice communication between 2 or more persons, including, without

limitation, a mobile telephone, a text messaging device, a paging device, a personal digital assistant, a laptop computer, a tablet computer, wearable electronic communications device or display, electronic equipment that is capable of playing a video game, solid state memory storage device or digital video disk, equipment on which digital photographs or videos are taken or transmitted or any combination thereof, or equipment that is capable of visually receiving a television broadcast; provided, however, that mobile electronic device shall not include any audio equipment or any equipment installed, or affixed, either temporarily or permanently, in a motor vehicle for the purpose of providing navigation or emergency assistance to the operator of such motor vehicle or video entertainment to the passengers in the rear seats of such motor vehicle.

"Cellphone" or "Mobile telephone", a handheld, wearable or portable cellular, analog, wireless, satellite or digital telephone, including a telephone with 2-way radio functionality, capable of sending or receiving telephone communications and which a user initiates, terminates or engages in a call using either at least one hand or through use of voice commands. For the purposes of this chapter, "mobile telephone" shall not amateur radios operated by those licensed by the Federal Communications Commission to operate such radios, or citizen band radios.

"Smart watch", means a wearable computing device that closely resembles a wristwatch or other time-keeping device with the capacity to act in place of or as an extension of an individual's cellphone. "Smart watch" shall not include a wearable device that can only tell time, monitor an individual's health informatics, or track an individual's physical location.

(2). Except as provided in subsection (3), a student may not use a student's cellphone, mobile electronic device, smart watch, or emerging technology at a public school during the school day.

(3). A school district:

(a) shall establish a policy that provides for when a student's use of a student's cellphone, mobile electronic device, smart watch or emerging technology is necessary:

(i) to respond to an imminent threat to the health or safety of an individual;

(ii) for a student's Individualized Education Plan or Section 504 accommodation plan;

(iii) certain English learner students; or

(iv) to address a medical necessity; and

(b) may create additional policies establishing reasonable exceptions to when a student may use a student's cellphone, mobile electronic device, smart watch or emerging technology in a manner the district determines does not interfere with the learning environment at a school.

(4). The department may create one or more model policies regarding when a student may use a student's cellphone, mobile electronic device, smart watch or emerging technology in a school during the school day. When establishing such policies, the department shall consider criteria that includes, but is not limited to the following:

(a) limiting use to specified time periods, designated locations, or during particular activities; and

(b) limiting use by requiring students to leave cellphones, mobile electronic devices, smart watches or emerging technology at the front of the classroom or in an administrative office, or by placing such devices in a secure container.

(5). Subject to appropriation and in accordance with Chapter 70, the department shall make rules:

(a) creating a grant program to assist a school district with the purchase of equipment for the implementation of this section; and

(b) establishing the criteria for the grant program described in subsection (5)(a), including:

(i) an application format;

(ii) relevant timelines and deadlines;

(iii) a scoring rubric, including criteria to determine a grant award amount;

(iv) allowable uses of a grant award, including types of equipment such as magnetic locking pouches; and

(v) any relevant data to evaluate the program that the department determines is necessary.

SECTION 2. Within 180 days of the effective date of this act, the department shall promulgate regulations to implement this section.

SENATE DOCKET, NO. 2220 FILED ON: 1/17/2025

Joint Committee on Education

Bill Summary

BILL NUMBER	Senate, No. 424; House, No. 549
TITLE	An Act to regulate the use of mobile communication devices in educational institutions
SPONSOR(S)	Senators O'Connor and Montigny
PRIOR HISTORY	N/A
CURRENT LAW	MGL 69 pertains to the powers and duties of DESE

NOTES

SUMMARY

This bill amends MGL 69 to require DESE to set standards and policies that prohibit the use of cell phones in public elementary, secondary, and voc-tech schools. Stipulates that these standards shall require students to store their phones in a designated area or locker during instructional hours, but allows schools to make exemptions for students with exceptional circumstances or special needs.

SENATE . . . . . No. 424

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PRESENTED BY:

Patrick M. O'Connor

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 regulate the use of mobile communication devices in educational institutions.

PETITION OF:

NAME:	DISTRICT/ADDRESS:	
Patrick M. O'Connor	*First Plymouth and Norfolk*	
Mark C. Montigny	*Second Bristol and Plymouth*	*1/24/2025*

SENATE DOCKET, NO. 2220 FILED ON: 1/17/2025

SENATE . . . . . No. 424

By Mr. O'Connor, a petition (accompanied by bill, Senate, No. 424) of Patrick M. O'Connor and Mark C. Montigny for legislation to regulate the use of mobile communication devices in educational institutions. Education.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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

An Act to regulate the use of mobile communication devices in educational institutions.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:

SECTION 1. Chapter 69 of the General Laws, as appearing in the 2022 Official Edition, is hereby amended by inserting after section 37 the following new section:-

Section 38.

(a) For the purposes of this section, "Mobile communication device" shall be defined as to any portable electronic device that enables voice communication, text messaging, internet access, and application usage, including but not limited to smartphones and tablets.

(b) The department shall establish standards for school districts to prohibit the usage of mobile communication devices during instructional hours within all public elementary, secondary, and vocational schools. These standards shall require students store mobile communication devices in designated areas or lockers during school hours to minimize distractions and enhance focus during educational activities. The standards shall not prohibit authorized personnel from using mobile communication devices for official school purposes or

students with documented medical needs or other exceptional circumstances from using mobile communication devices as approved by school administration. The standards shall require ensure schools establish clear communication to students and parents regarding the regulations and any consequences for violations of the school's cell phone policy.

(c) The standards may allow schools to adopt exceptions for cellular phones which do not provide internet access or application usage to its users, so that students may communicate with parents and guardians while minimizing noise and distractions to the learning environment.

SECTION 2. This act shall take effect at the beginning of the next academic year following its passage.

HOUSE . . . . . No. 533

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PRESENTED BY:

Manny Cruz and Estela A. Reyes

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 expand the use of career and academic plans.

PETITION OF:

NAME:	DISTRICT/ADDRESS:	DATE ADDED:
Manny Cruz	*7th Essex*	*1/16/2025*

HOUSE DOCKET, NO. 2744 FILED ON: 1/16/2025

HOUSE . . . . . No. 533

By Representatives Cruz of Salem and Reyes of Lawrence, a petition (accompanied by bill, House, No. 533) of Manny Cruz for legislation to expand the use of career and academic plans. Education.

[SIMILAR MATTER FILED IN PREVIOUS SESSION
SEE HOUSE, NO. *444* OF 2023-2024.]

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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

An Act to expand the use of career and academic plans.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:

Chapter 71 of the General Laws, as appearing in the 2022 official edition, is amended by adding the following new section:-

Section 100. (a) For the purposes of this section, the following terms shall have the following meanings:

"college and career pathway program", a high school based program, designated by the department of elementary and secondary education, which offers a sequenced and/or career-themed set of academic and/or work-based learning experiences, including designated early college programs, vocational-technical education programs, innovation pathways programs, and STEM tech career academies which can lead to, in the department's opinion, improved college and career readiness outcomes.

"individual learning plan", a plan devised by individual students with assistance from a designated educator that provides a clear and detailed student academic pathway from secondary

to post- secondary education or career with regard to coursework, sequencing and experiences beyond the classroom, beginning in the ninth grade or earlier.

"MyCAP", an acronym for My Career and Academic Plan, a process for creating a student's individual learning plan as defined in this subsection, and supported by utilization of an online platform,

(b) All public school districts shall ensure that all high school students, beginning in the ninth grade, have developed, with the support of a designated educator and an online platform approved by the department of elementary and secondary education, an individual learning plan as defined in subsection a of this section. Said plans shall allow students to continue to adapt said plans and to make reasonable and relevant changes to their plans through the course of their secondary education that allow for a continuing process of alignment with the student's needs and planning goals. Districts will provide support to students to participate in the development and refinement of their plans. Districts will also make every reasonable effort to offer students the experiences identified in their plans to ensure alignment with, and accomplishment of, the student's goals for post-graduate success.

(c) Nothing contained herein will prevent districts from beginning the process of having students develop individual learning plans prior to beginning high school, for students within their jurisdictions.

(d) Districts shall report annually to the department of elementary and secondary education on their progress in meeting the requirements contained in this section.

(e) The department of elementary and secondary education shall develop guidance for districts to oversee and ensure their compliance with the provisions of this section, aligned with their current guidance to districts utilizing the structure of the MyCAP system and its component parts.

(f) This section will take effect on September 1, 2028.

SENATE DOCKET, NO. 1464 FILED ON: 1/16/2025

Joint Committee on Education

Bill Summary

BILL NUMBER	House, No. 533 ; Senate, No. 438
TITLE	An Act to expand the use of career and academic plans.
SPONSOR(S)	Representatives Cruz of Salem and Reyes of Lawrence Senator Pavel Payano of First Essex
PRIOR HISTORY	H.444 of the 2023-2024 session; Committee redrafted to H.4399, sent to HWM.
CURRENT LAW	MGL 71 pertains to public schools

SUMMARY

This bill amends Chapter 71 of the MGL by adding a new section, Section 100, which defines "college and career pathway program," "individual learning plan," and "MyCAP." Additionally, this bill requires all schools to ensure that high school students, from 9th grade onwards, develop an individual learning plan, that provides a clear and detailed academic pathway from secondary to post-secondary education and career with regard to coursework, sequencing and experiences beyond the classroom. These plans shall be developed by the students themselves with the help of a designated educator. Takes effect on September 1, 2028.

SENATE . . . . . No. 438

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 to expand the use of career and academic plans.

PETITION OF:

NAME:	DISTRICT/ADDRESS:
Pavel M. Payano	*First Essex*

SENATE DOCKET, NO. 1464 FILED ON: 1/16/2025

SENATE . . . . . No. 438

By Mr. Payano, a petition (accompanied by bill, Senate, No. 438) of Pavel M. Payano for legislation relative to individual learning plans for students. Education.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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

An Act to expand the use of career and academic plans.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:

Chapter 71 of the General Laws, as appearing in the 2022 official edition, is amended by adding the following new section:-

Section 100. (a) For the purposes of this section, the following terms shall have the following meanings:

"college and career pathway program", a high school based program, designated by the department of elementary and secondary education, which offers a sequenced and/or career-themed set of academic and/or work-based learning experiences, including designated early college programs, vocational-technical education programs, innovation pathways programs, and STEM tech career academies which can lead to, in the department's opinion, improved college and career readiness outcomes.

"individual learning plan", a plan devised by individual students with assistance from a designated educator that provides a clear and detailed student academic pathway from secondary

to post- secondary education or career with regard to coursework, sequencing and experiences beyond the classroom, beginning in the ninth grade or earlier.

"MyCAP", an acronym for My Career and Academic Plan, a process for creating a student's individual learning plan as defined in this subsection, and supported by utilization of an online platform,

(b) All public school districts shall ensure that all high school students, beginning in the ninth grade, have developed, with the support of a designated educator and an online platform approved by the department of elementary and secondary education, an individual learning plan as defined in subsection a of this section. Said plans shall allow students to continue to adapt said plans and to make reasonable and relevant changes to their plans through the course of their secondary education that allow for a continuing process of alignment with the student's needs and planning goals. Districts will provide support to students to participate in the development and refinement of their plans. Districts will also make every reasonable effort to offer students the experiences identified in their plans to ensure alignment with, and accomplishment of, the student's goals for post-graduate success.

(c) Nothing contained herein will prevent districts from beginning the process of having students develop individual learning plans prior to beginning high school, for students within their jurisdictions.

(d) Districts shall report annually to the department of elementary and secondary education on their progress in meeting the requirements contained in this section.

(e) The department of elementary and secondary education shall develop guidance for districts to oversee and ensure their compliance with the provisions of this section, aligned with

their current guidance to districts utilizing the structure of the MyCAP system and its component parts.

(f) This section will take effect on September 1, 2028.

SENATE DOCKET, NO. 2285 FILED ON: 1/17/2025

SENATE . . . . . No. 463

By Mr. Velis (by request), a petition (accompanied by bill, Senate, No. 463) of Kirstin Beatty, for legislation to regulate screen time and technology privacy in early and K-12 education. Education.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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

An Act regulating screen time and technology privacy in early and K-12 education.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:

SECTION 1. The legislature finds and declares all of the following:

Whereas, information technology captures data for profiling, predictive analytics, and crime, and addictive persuasive design influences thoughts and behavior.

Whereas, the Journal of the American Medical Association published a 2019 study that found high levels of screen time reduces structural integrity in key brain areas responsible for literacy and language.

Whereas, digital programs are under corporate direction and outside local control, and the content of corporate educational materials has often been found to reflect corporate interests, corporate marketing, be generic, and lack currency or individualization.

Whereas, the Massachusetts education standards mandate screen time: writing standards require students “use [digital tools (e.g. computers, mobile phones, cameras)] to convey

messages in pictures and in words" in PreK; "explore a variety of digital tools" to write in Grade 1; and gather information from digital sources by Grade 3.

Whereas, integrating software learning into every subject requires far too much time and energy of teachers and students to evaluate, regulate, learn, fix and maintain software that quickly becomes outmoded -- yet Massachusetts education standards integrate technology into every subject and thus subtract precious time from other subjects like handwriting and mathematics, as well as from higher order thinking and knowledge.

Whereas, an hour of videoconferencing or streaming emits 150 – 1,000 grams of carbon dioxide (a gallon of gasoline car exhaust emits about 8,887 grams), requires 2 – 12 liters of water, and demands a land area about the size of an iPad Mini (Obringer et al, 2021).

Whereas, mandates for screen time prevent public schools from adopting alternative learning models that may be locally preferred, such as Montessori, Waldorf, or outdoor learning models.

Whereas, extended screen time is widely acknowledged as harmful to physical health due to time sitting, staring, blue light exposure, magnetic and electric fields, wireless emissions, and lack of movement.

Whereas, Dr. Martin Pall, Dr. Devra Davis, Dr. Henry Lai, Dr. Belpoggi, Dr. Belyaev, Dr. De-Kun Li, Dr. Belpomme, and countless other reputable experts have provided peer-reviewed studies demonstrating that exposure to non-ionizing radiation like wireless and certain electricity exposures causes DNA breaks and mutations in germ line cells that produce mutations in future generations; produces oxidative stress and free radical damage that have major roles in

chronic disease; and attacks the endocrine and nervous systems including our hormone balance and our brains.

Resolved, that the policy goals of this act shall be to encourage educational authorities to view technology use and screen time as secondary to education, utilizing only when strong evidence of benefits exists and privacy is protected; to eliminate state mandates to utilize technology across curriculum in public schools; to provide a basic set of limits on student technology and school screen time use from early education through grade twelve; and to encourage alternatives to virtual and digital learning.

SECTION 2. Chapter 69 of the General Laws is hereby amended by adding the following section:-

School screen time and cellphone limits

(a) Definitions. As used in this section, the following words shall have the following meanings:

“Board" is the board of elementary and secondary education.

"Commissioner" is the commissioner of elementary and secondary education.

“Confidential data” is data collected on students or staff and which includes:

(1) standard identifying information:

i. names of staff and students

ii. dates of birth

iii. addresses

iv. grades

v. medical information

vi. exam results

vii. staff development reviews

viii. assessments

ix. other personal identifying information

(2) identifying data such as location-tracking, photographs, and biometric data, which includes unique biological or behavioral identifiers such but not limited to voice audio, fingerprints, gait recognition, and keystroke dynamics.

(3) personal writings or other personal work such as art

(4) political views

(5) socioeconomic data

(6) disciplinary data

(7) similar data or information on other individuals that are not students or staff, but may be referenced in or extracted from student and staff data.

(8) observed and inferred data from the data provided

"Department" is the department of elementary and secondary education.

“Screen time” is time viewing a technological or digital screen which includes but is not limited to a television, a smart board, projector, or computer.

"Passive screen time" is time viewing a technological or digital screen in which one only observes and does not interact or alter the screen by typing or otherwise moving the body.

"Interactive screen time" is time viewing and interacting with or altering a technological or digital screen by typing or otherwise moving the body.

"Virtual reality" is an interactive screen time experience taking place in a simulated visual environment, either real or imagined, and may incorporate auditory and sensory feedback. Augmented reality systems is a type of virtual reality in which perception of the real world is augmented by computer-generated perceptual information such as visual, auditory, haptic, somatosensory, and olfactory.

"Authority" is the authority legally invested with setting policy for a public charter school, virtual school, or, in the case of a school district, the elected school committee.

(b) School screen time limits. Each public school authority shall set and publish a limit on school screen time and cellphone use, setting limits for both interactive screen time and passive screen time with input from the local community, school staff, students, and guardians. A baseline for school screen time and cellphone limits is provided in subsection (e), which shall apply unless the authority adopts more stringent or liberal limits. The authority must base its school screen time limits on the principles defined in subsection (c) and must follow a public commenting process as defined in subsection (d) for an initial and ensuing annual review. Except as defined in subsection (f), any other revisions to existing school screen time limits also require a public hearing.

Except as defined in this subsection and subsection (f), it shall be unlawful for any school or teaching staff to allow a student enrolled in either public primary or secondary schools in the

Commonwealth to exceed screen time limits during and after school hours for school-related assignments, including extra-curricular activities.

Except as defined in subsection (c) and (f), it shall be unlawful to require screen time as a condition of public primary and secondary school required coursework or activities.

Nothing in this law requires the use of digital technology or screen time, nor preempts more restrictive state or local limitations.

(c) Screen time principles. School screen time limits must be premised on educational benefits to the student and safe use rather than simply convenience or savings to the educator or school system. Therefore, recommendations for school screen time limits must be based on the following findings:

(1) The educational goal cannot be as easily or as quickly be accomplished by traditional educational methods which do not use screen time and the use of technology serves an educational purpose;

(2) The specific use of screen time provides educational benefits superior to traditional methods which do not use screen time;

(3) The selection of products, potential gateways to other platforms, and scheduling of screen time is carefully considered to prevent physical, psychological, social, cultural, and neurological adverse consequences, including digital addiction;

(4) Other than exceptions listed in subsection (f), courses and school activities revolving around prolonged screen time are limited to students in grades 8 to 12, with no more than 90 minutes of screen time daily through grade 9 and 120 minutes of screen time daily through grade 12.

(5) Other than exceptions listed in subsection (f), children or students below grade eight are not to exceed more than 5 hours of passive screen time in a month; to have no interactive screen time below grade four; and from grade four through seven are not to exceed more than 1 hour of interactive screen time weekly.

(5) Students under age 16 are not to use virtual reality technology.

(6) Students age 16 and above are not to use to virtual reality technology without an explicit opt-in form, explicit verbal warnings of potential negative effects, and, unless clear scientific evidence proves safety for both mental and physical development, must limit time spent in virtual reality to a maximum of 1 hour in a year expressly tied to a specific educational purpose other than entertainment.

(8) Courses or school activities that revolve around extensive screen time are voluntary, and screen time requirements in those activities highly relevant to the subject matter of the course or school activity.

(9) Traditional forms of instruction and learning which do not use screen time are preferred whenever desired by the educator or when these accomplish the task as well or approximately as well.

(10) Technology implementation and use follows the best practices for health, safety, and confidential data protection, and closes any intentional or unintentional gateway to products or services with adverse impacts, such as from, but not limited to, persuasive design, distracting entertainment, and data profiling.

(11) Use of digital technology or screen time is carefully designed by the school, teacher, and support staff to insure procedures are in place, including data processing agreements, to help protect confidential data and, when the purpose is fulfilled, destroy the confidential data.

(12) If the screen time involves voice or video recording, the careful consideration of whether students or educators must be heard or visible on the screen, and whether video and sound recordings can be avoided and still fulfill the educational purpose.

(13) Compliance with all confidential data protection requirements at the local, state, and federal level.

(d) Public hearing decision. Except as defined in section (f), the authority must provide for a public hearing during annual reviews and before setting any new screen time limits.

For the public hearing, each authority shall publish a public notice and shall additionally inform all students, guardians, and school personnel of the hearing and commenting procedures using standard protocols used by the school or school district. These notices shall provide an electronic and postal address for written submissions; hearing time, date, and location; and that any party with a financial interest in promoting cellphone use or screen time is to self-identify by including the name of any relevant business and any product in conjunction with his or her name and accompanying statement of financial interest. The public hearing shall be set at time convenient to most school personnel, students, and guardians.

School teachers and school departments shall be provided time in school to meet as departments and as a school at least three weeks in advance of the hearing in order to review and discuss the proposed screen time and cellphone limits, principles, and consider recommendations for submission of public comments to the authority.

The hearing and all written comments, including the names of the testifiers, submitted shall be subject to the Open Meeting Law and written comments shall be available to the public for a reasonable sliding-scale fee or freely available for review – however, one exception to this rule shall be that any student, guardian, or teacher request based on personal needs shall not require or allow exposure of the name of the testifier unless desired by the testifier and, if relevant, his or her guardian.

Following the hearing and within eight weeks, the authority shall finalize and vote on the cellphone and screen time limits by a vote of the majority members of the authority and shall prepare a public statement of its decision.

The public statement must state :

(1) all requests for additional screen time or cellphones by parties outside of the school system, excepting requests exempted under subsection (f) or (j), including for potential future attendance;

(2) for each request for additional screen time, the relevant names of any school district or school staff who made the request, excepting requests exempted by subsection (f) or (j);

(3) a clearly marked list of all individuals with a financial interest due to business or to potential product sales that request increased screen time;

(4) the factual reasoning for the decisions based on the principles in subsection (c);

(5) how the individuals of the authority voted;

(6) optionally, a statement of reasons for dissent prepared by any individual(s) in the authority.

(e) Proposed screen time and cellphone limits. Proposed screen time restrictions are provided according to grade level as follows:

(1) Pre-K through kindergarten screen time: maximum of 4 hours, none of which may be interactive;

(2) First through second grade: maximum 5 hours per school year, none of which may be interactive;

(3) Grade three through seven passive screen time: maximum of one hour a day and 5 hours total in the school year;

(4) Grade three interactive screen time: none;

(4) Grade four through seven interactive screen time: maximum of 20 minutes a day and a maximum of 3.5 hours total in the school year;

(5) Grade 8 through 10 passive screen time: maximum of one hour a day and 25 hours total in the school year;

(6) Grade eight interactive screen time: maximum of one hour a day and 5 hours total in the school year.

(7) Grade nine through ten interactive screen time: maximum of one hour daily and 10 hours total in the school year.

(8) Grade 11 through 12 passive screen time: maximum of one hour a day and 35 hours total in the school year;

(9) Grade eleven through twelve interactive screen time: maximum of one hour daily and 30 hours total in the school year.

(10) All grades are to leave cellphones at home or in airplane mode at school in furnished lock-boxes, relying on the school telecommunications system for any necessary calls.

(f) Exceptions to screen time limits. With a public hearing, individual or school-wide exceptions may be granted to school screen time limits beginning in the eighth grade for: (1) specialized, optional courses whose subject requires screen time, such as computer programming; and (2) extracurricular activities whose subject requires screen time, such as a computer programming club.

A Commonwealth virtual school shall be excepted from screen time limits insofar as excused by its design as described in section 94 of Chapter 71 Title I of the General Laws. Despite this exception, the virtual school must to the maximum extent use its resources to minimize screen time, where possible and when beneficial to the student, and to meet the expectations of subsections (d) and (c), including reporting.

Some exceptions to screen time limits do not require a public hearing due to private or emergency nature. If an exception is granted to school screen time limits on the basis of a school or public emergency, the authority shall reconvene as soon as the emergency has passed to establish an orderly, swift process to end the temporary extension and return to the limits previously established without the need for a public hearing. If the reason for an exception no longer exists with respect to a private need, the exception granted is ended.

The following exceptions shall be granted with respect to school screen time limits without requiring a public hearing:

(1) when a condition of the student's individualized education plan, or when a licensed physician determines necessary for health, an exception to school- or district-wide screen time limits shall be granted;

(2) quarantine to prevent transmission of a dangerous disease;

(3) personal condition of a student that prevents student school attendance, such as a personal emergency or suspension from school;

(4) an unexpected school or public disaster obstructing use of classrooms for in-person learning.

(g) Informed consent and opt-outs. Information about school technology shall be made available to school students, guardians, and staff to support the principles in subsection (c) by the authority to the best of its knowledge and ability. The authority shall insure each educator has easy access to a printed list of all software and technologies utilized by the educator, including as specifically connected to each technology product or service, information about the data collected, parties to the data, associated companies, data processing agreements, and any attendant risks provided in the product manual or service contract and any other attendant risks that are known to exist.

The authority shall insure each guardian and student is also provided with a copy of the list as relevant to the student. The delivery of this information to students and guardians may be assigned to classroom teachers.

Given this information, each guardian and student shall be provided with the opportunity to opt out of the use of any specific product or service.

(h) Violations. Each authority shall establish a screen time policy to prevent violations and to deal with students and staff who violate this law that includes consequences to prevent violations. This screen time policy shall include staff professional development on the policy and the hazards of excessive screen time and technology use.

Any outside party, including any co-conspirators, attempting to subvert this law in order to increase the use of any technological product shall be subject to civil charges and a penalty. The party or parties shall pay restitution and return profits, including earnings for lobbying. Additionally each party shall be pay a maximum fine of the earnings the party has available in 15 days, based on the preceding year's earnings, or serve equivalent time in custody or performing charitable service, or both serve the time and pay the fine.

(i) Cellphone limits. The authority shall adopt a policy to limit or prohibit the use by students of cellphones while the students are the school site or while under the supervision and control of an employee or employees of that school or school district. The authority may also limit use by staff.

(j) Cellphone exceptions. Notwithstanding subsection (i), no person shall be prohibited from possessing or using a cellphone under any of the following circumstances:

(1) In the case of an emergency, or in response to a perceived threat of danger.

(2) When a licensed physician and surgeon determines that the possession or use of a cellphone is necessary to the person's health.

(3) When the possession or use of a cell phone is required in a student's individualized education program.

(k) End technology mandate across curriculum. The Board, commissioner, and department shall revise state education goals, curriculum frameworks, and evaluation requirements to eliminate any educational mandate for the use of digital technology or of information technology except in extracurricular courses in the subject area, and eliminate requirements and evaluations of the use of digital and information technology across curriculum in all subjects excepting courses in the subject area.

SECTION 3. Section 1I of chapter 69 of the General Laws, as appearing in the 2021 Official Edition, is hereby amended by adding the following paragraph after the first paragraph:-

Digital technology use shall be an optional and not a required condition of public school learning. Unless voluntarily enrolling in a technology course, no public school student or legal guardian shall be treated with prejudice or found wanting in an evaluation due to following a principle of restricting or avoiding student digital technology use. A student or school may safely restrict or avoid digital student technology use and still be provided high marks in evaluation based upon other measures. Within reason, however, such a school shall be expected to insure students understand age-appropriate aspects of digital technology use related to safety, health, responsibility, societal impacts, and privacy.

SECTION 4. Section 1I of chapter 69 of the General Laws, as appearing in the 2021 Official Edition, is hereby amended striking the phrase “and (d) performance benchmarks and processes for evaluating the effect of district improvement initiatives” and replacing with the following phrase:-

and (d) performance benchmarks and processes for evaluating the effect of district improvement initiatives; performance benchmarks and processes shall include not only academic evaluation, but evaluation of measures to improve environmental health, protect privacy, protect

cybersecurity, reduce screen time, encourage academic freedom, reduce student and staff stress, and provide adequately for student recess, social interaction, and intermittent breaks

SECTION 5. Subsection (a) of Section 94 of Chapter 71 of the General Laws, as appearing in the 2021 Official Edition, is hereby amended by striking out the sentence “"Commonwealth virtual school", a public school operated by a board of trustees whose teachers primarily teach from a remote location using the internet or other computer-based methods and whose students are not required to be located at the physical premises of the school.” and inserting in place thereof the following sentence:-

"Commonwealth virtual school" is a public school operated by a board of trustees whose teachers primarily use distance learning, where the student is not required to be located at the physical premises of the school and instead uses computer-based methods, the internet, telephone, or correspondence by post.

SECTION 6. Section 94 of Chapter 71 of the General Laws, as appearing in the 2021 Official Edition, is hereby amended by adding the following subsection:-

(s) In reviewing proposals, conducting certification and re-certification, the board and department shall require virtual schools to adopt pedagogical strategies and curriculum, when possible and appropriate to student ability, which adopt the following policies: (1) reduce the time students spend before digital screens; (2) with remote learning, provide real-time access to the subject-area teacher during school hours or an option clear to the students for reaching subject-area teachers during school hours for help; (3) provide a weekly schedule for students or guardians to access teachers with a phone call or other real-time in-person method comparable to after-school hours at traditional brick-and-mortar schools; (4) routinely include teacher-led virtual lessons in real time, rather than relying exclusively on EdTech programs; (5) utilize and

favor curriculum and lessons the teacher has vetted, modified, and chosen or created in coordination with student needs and current events, rather than industrial, mass-produced, programmed, or otherwise scripted curriculum.

SECTION 7. Chapter 15D of Part I Title II of the General Laws is hereby amended by adding the following section: -

(a) Definitions. As used in this section, the following words shall have the following meanings:

“Confidential data” is data collected on students or staff and which includes:

(1) standard identifying information:

i. names of staff and students

ii. dates of birth

iii. addresses

iv. grades

v. medical information

vi. exam results

vii. staff development reviews

viii. assessments

ix. other personal identifying information

(2) identifying data such as location-tracking, photographs, and biometric data, which includes unique biological or behavioral identifiers such but not limited to voice audio, fingerprints, gait recognition, and keystroke dynamics.

(3) personal writings or other personal work such as art

(4) political views

(5) socioeconomic data

(6) disciplinary data

(7) similar data or information on other individuals that are not students or staff, but may be referenced in or extracted from student and staff data.

(8) observed and inferred data from the data provided

“Interactive screen time” is time viewing and interacting with or altering a technological or digital screen by typing or otherwise moving the body.

“Screen time” is time viewing a technological or digital screen which includes but is not limited to a television, a smart board, projector, or computer.

“Passive screen time” is time viewing a technological or digital screen in which one only observes and does not interact or alter the screen by typing or otherwise moving the body.

(b) Technology screen, safety and privacy limits. The department of early education and care, the commissioner of early education and care, and the board of early education and care shall limit and circumscribe screen time and digital technology in early education and care for the benefit of staff and children, including but not limited to the following conditions:

(1) Areas where children spend the majority of time shall not have a television, computer monitor, or other screen routinely playing video, including moving images, or video games, to provide for either passive or interactive screen time.

(2) Toys utilized by children in early education and care shall not have the capability for passive or interactive screen time.

(3) Toys utilized in early education and care shall not have the ability to record confidential data.

(4) Passive and interactive screen time shall be prohibited for children under age 4.

(5) Beginning at the age of 4, children may be allowed passive screen time, not interactive screen time however. Passive screen time is not to exceed one of the following choices: (i) one day of each week for 90 minutes; (ii) 20 minutes daily; or (iii) three days for 30 minutes.

(6) Promote non-digital social interaction, time outdoors, and free play and prevent use of screen time as a reward.

(7) Children are not to utilize a cellphone or other screen-based digital device as a toy.

(8) Limit and discourage the posting of children's confidential data on social media, unsecured cellphones, or other non-secure online platforms and if posting first acquire permission from the guardian(s).

(9) Provide that early education certification and re-certification provides relevant education on cybersecurity, privacy, screen time and technology concerns.

(10) Limit and discourage the posting of children's confidential data on social media, unsecured cellphones, or other non-secure online platforms and if posting first acquire permission from the guardian(s).

(11) Provide that early education certification and re-certification provides relevant technology education on cybersecurity, privacy, cultural and electromagnetic hazards.

(13) Discourage or limit the use of wireless devices, including video and voice devices intended to monitor children.

(14) Regulate screen time to prevent the impact of bright, artificial light from disrupting circadian rhythms and sleep.

(15) Test electric and magnetic fields to insure that the play and rest areas have at minimum an extremely low frequency (ELF) and very low frequency (VLF) magnetic field less than 100 microTesla (100 nT), an ELF and VLF electrical field less than 1 volt per meter (V/m), and insure electrical equipment is kept away from play and rest areas – if stricter limits or policies are recommended by the state or federal government, adopt these stricter limits or policies.

(16) Avoid the use of wireless devices, such as routers or cellphones, and WiFi near or in play or rest areas, or where children spend the majority of time.

(17) Hard wire any necessary digital equipment and verify that wireless transmissions have been and remain halted.

(18) Adopt best practices to protect environmental health with regard to electromagnetic and chemical emissions from electric equipment and digital technology.

SENATE DOCKET, NO. 2496 FILED ON: 1/17/2025

SENATE . . . . . No. 333

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 promote phone free schools.

PETITION OF:

NAME:	DISTRICT/ADDRESS:	
John J. Cronin	*Worcester and Middlesex*	
Mark C. Montigny	*Second Bristol and Plymouth*	*1/28/2025*

SENATE DOCKET, NO. 2496 FILED ON: 1/17/2025

SENATE . . . . . No. 333

By Mr. Cronin, a petition (accompanied by bill, Senate, No. 333) of John J. Cronin and Mark C. Montigny for legislation to prohibiting the use of wireless communication devices in K-12 public schools by students. Education.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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

An Act to promote phone free schools.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:

The department of elementary and secondary education shall establish a written policy prohibiting the use of wireless communication devices in K-12 public schools by students during the school day unless authorized by a principal. The policy shall include:

(a) one or more secure, designated areas where students may store their cellular telephones during the school day, which may include student lockers.

(b) one or more methods for parents and guardians of students to readily contact students during the school day and provide for written notification of parents and guardians of these methods at the beginning of each school year.

(c) The department of elementary and secondary education regulations shall provide for medical exceptions and other appropriate exigencies.

SENATE DOCKET, NO. 1653 FILED ON: 1/16/2025

SENATE . . . . . No. 323

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PRESENTED BY:

Brendan P. Crighton

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 providing for phone free schools.

PETITION OF:

NAME:	DISTRICT/ADDRESS:	
Brendan P. Crighton	*Third Essex*	
Mark C. Montigny	*Second Bristol and Plymouth*	*2/28/2025*

SENATE DOCKET, NO. 1653 FILED ON: 1/16/2025

SENATE . . . . . No. 323

By Mr. Crighton, a petition (accompanied by bill, Senate, No. 323) of Brendan P. Crighton and Mark C. Montigny for legislation to prohibit the use to personal electronic devices in schools. Education.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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

An Act providing for phone free schools.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:

SECTION 1. Chapter 69 of the General Laws is hereby amended by adding the following section:-

Section 38. (a) As used in this section, the following words shall have the following meanings unless the context clearly requires otherwise:

“Board", the board of elementary and secondary education.

"Commissioner", the commissioner of elementary and secondary education.

"Department', the department of elementary and secondary education.

“Personal electronic devices”, any electronic equipment capable of collecting, processing or transferring data including, but not limited to, smartphones, cellular phones, tablets or gaming devices.

(b) Each school district shall have a comprehensive policy to prohibit student access to personal electronic devices during the school day. Policies shall include restrictions that align with the developmental level of students and the structure of the school day in each grade level and school and shall consider guidance issued by the department. This policy shall not preclude the use of school-issued or sanctioned devices that serve a legitimate educational purpose.

Each school district shall engage in a public comment period to receive feedback from school leaders, educators, families, students and relevant stakeholders while developing the policy.

Each school district shall ensure that behavioral expectations related to personal electronic devices are included in the relevant student code of conduct and shall educate the students on issues related to the use of personal electronic devices, including, but not limited to: (i) cyberbullying; (ii) accessing or sharing inappropriate content; (iii) recording or taking photographs without consent; (iv) plagiarism; and (v) the unapproved use of artificial intelligence software and applications.

Each school district shall submit their policy as required under this subsection to the department for approval. To receive approval from the department, policies shall include a prohibition on access to personal electronic devices during the school day, including during times spent outside of the classroom, and specific procedures for collecting, isolating and returning personal electronic devices.

The department shall provide technical assistance to school districts for policy development and implementation.

SECTION 2. Not later than 6 months after the effective date of this act, the department of elementary and secondary education and the board of elementary and secondary education shall issue guidance for school districts to consider when drafting and adopting the policy required under section 38 of chapter 69 of the General Laws. Such guidance shall emphasize creating engaging spaces for learning and mitigating the negative impact that cell phones have on student learning and shall include considerations for specific policies and practices for elementary, middle, and high school students based on developmental readiness and maturity.

The guidance shall address areas including, but not be limited to: (i) provisions for school and student health and safety, including dedicated methods for parents to communicate with their children; (ii) exceptions to the policy based on a student's individualized education plan; (iii) accommodations under section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, 29 U.S.C. section 794, or individualized health or learning plan or any other accommodations under state or federal law, including, but not limited to, title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act, 42 U.S.C. sections 12131–12165; (iv) compliance with applicable federal and state laws; and (v) impact on multilingual learners.

SECTION 3. Subsection (b) of section 38 of chapter 69 of the General Laws shall take effect not later than six months after the department of elementary and secondary education has issued its guidance.

HOUSE DOCKET, NO. 2819 FILED ON: 1/16/2025

Joint Committee on Education

Bill Summary

BILL NUMBER	House, No. 720
TITLE	An Act prohibiting cell phone usage during the school day
SPONSOR(S)	Representative Turco of Winthrop
PRIOR HISTORY	N/A
CURRENT LAW	MGL 71 pertains to public schools

SUMMARY

Require superintendents to implement and maintain a policy that prohibits the use of cell phones and other personal electronic devices during the school day, except as authorized by a teacher or administrator or in the case of an emergency. The policy chosen by the superintendent must be submitted annually to the board.

HOUSE . . . . . No. 720

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PRESENTED BY:

Jeffrey Rosario Turco

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 prohibiting cell phone usage during the school day.

PETITION OF:

NAME:	DISTRICT/ADDRESS:	DATE ADDED:
Jeffrey Rosario Turco	*19th Suffolk*	*1/16/2025*

HOUSE DOCKET, NO. 2819 FILED ON: 1/16/2025

HOUSE . . . . . No. 720

By Representative Turco of Winthrop, a petition (accompanied by bill, House, No. 720) of Jeffrey Rosario Turco for legislation to prohibit cell phone or other personal electronic device usage by students during the school day. Education.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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

An Act prohibiting cell phone usage during the school day.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:

Chapter 71 of the General Laws is hereby amended by adding the following section:-

Section 101. (a) The superintendent of every school district shall implement and maintain a policy prohibiting the use by students of cell phones or other personal electronic devices during the school day, except as authorized by a teacher or administrator or used in the case of an emergency.

(b) Annually, the superintendent shall submit the policy to the board.

HOUSE DOCKET, NO. 239 FILED ON: 1/7/2025

Joint Committee on Education

Bill Summary

BILL NUMBER	House, No. 585
TITLE	Resolve authorizing a study of starting times and schedules
SPONSORS	Representatives Gentile of Sudbury
SIMILAR MATTERS	N/A
PRIOR HISTORY	H.486 of the 2023-2024 session; attached without language. H.600 of the 2021-22 session, Redrafted, see H.3980, Reported favorably to HWM.
CURRENT LAW	N/A

SUMMARY

The bill requires the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to convene a task force to review school day start times for middle school and secondary school students. The task force shall consider: sleep needs; the number of districts that have pushed start times and their performance; resources available to delay start times; and whether a later start time is beneficial to health and learning. The task force must file a report containing findings and recommendations by July 1, 2026 [sic].

HOUSE . . . . . No. 585

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PRESENTED BY:

Carmine Lawrence Gentile

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 resolve:

Resolve authorizing a study of starting times and schedules.

PETITION OF:

NAME:	DISTRICT/ADDRESS:	DATE ADDED:
Carmine Lawrence Gentile	*13th Middlesex*	*1/7/2025*
James C. Arena-DeRosa	*8th Middlesex*	*3/15/2025*
James B. Eldridge	*Middlesex and Worcester*	*2/10/2025*
Margaret R. Scarsdale	*1st Middlesex*	*4/1/2025*

HOUSE DOCKET, NO. 239 FILED ON: 1/7/2025

HOUSE . . . . . No. 585

By Representative Gentile of Sudbury, a petition (accompanied by resolve, House, No. 585) of Carmine Lawrence Gentile and James B. Eldridge for an investigation by a task force relative to the effect of school day start times for middle and secondary school students. Education.

[SIMILAR MATTER FILED IN PREVIOUS SESSION
SEE HOUSE, NO. *486* OF 2023-2024.]

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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

Resolve authorizing a study of starting times and schedules.

Resolved, That the department of elementary and secondary education shall convene an educational task force to review the effect of school day start times for middle school and secondary school students. The task force shall consist of: the commissioner of elementary and secondary education or a designee who shall serve as chair; the secretary of education or a designee; the executive director of the Massachusetts Association of School Committees, Inc. or a designee; the executive director of the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents, Inc. or a designee; the executive director of the Massachusetts Secondary Schools Administration Association, Inc. or a designee; the executive director of Start School Later, Inc. or a designee; the executive director of the Massachusetts Association of School Business Officials, Inc. or a designee; a representative from the National Sleep Foundation; a parent of a high school student who is a member of a school council, as defined in section 59C of chapter 71

of the General Laws; and a superintendent from a district which has implemented later school day start times.

The task force shall: (i) conduct a comprehensive study, including a review of the scientific findings relative to sleep needs of adolescents and the effect that middle school and secondary school day start times have on the health and academic performance of students; (ii) determine the number of districts in the commonwealth that have implemented later school day start times for middle schools and secondary schools and examine the academic performance of students, including performance on statewide tests; and (iii) identify resources and opportunities to assist districts in implementing later school day start times for middle schools and secondary schools, should the task force's findings under clauses (i) and (ii) suggest that a later school day start time is beneficial to student learning.

The task force shall file a report containing its findings and recommendations, including legislation necessary to carry out its recommendations, with the clerks of the senate and house of representatives by July 1, 2026.

SENATE DOCKET, NO. 2351 FILED ON: 1/17/2025

SENATE . . . . . No. 360

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PRESENTED BY:

***Dylan A. Fernandes*, (BY REQUEST)**

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 school start times for middle and high school students.

PETITION OF:

NAME:	DISTRICT/ADDRESS:
Zorianna Petrosyan	

SENATE DOCKET, NO. 2351 FILED ON: 1/17/2025

SENATE . . . . . No. 360

By Mr. Fernandes (by request), a petition (accompanied by bill, Senate, No. 360) of Zorianna Petrosyan, for legislation relative to school start times for middle and high school students. Education.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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

An Act relative to school start times for middle and high school students.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:

SECTION. 1. Chapter 69 of the General Laws, as appearing in the 2020 Official Edition, is hereby amended by striking out section 1G and inserting in place thereof the following:-

Section 1G. (a) The board shall establish the minimum length for a school day and the minimum number of days in the school year.

(b) (i) The school day for all high schools, including high schools operated as charter schools, shall begin no earlier than 9:00 a.m.

(ii) The school day for all middle schools, including middle schools operated as charter schools, shall begin no earlier than 8:30 a.m.

(iii) For purposes of this section, “school day” has the same meaning as defined by the school district or charter school for purposes of calculating average daily attendance in order to compute any apportionments of state funding.

(iv) The board shall promulgate such rules and regulations as necessary to implement this section in a manner that is fair and equitable.

(v) No public school within the commonwealth shall be entitled to any apportionments of state funding unless the report of the trustees or board for the preceding school year shall show that the school followed this section.

(vi) If the board determines that this section contains costs mandated by the state, reimbursement to local agencies and school districts for those costs shall be made pursuant to chapters 70 and 71.

SECTION 2. Section 1 shall be implemented by all public schools no later than July 1, 2028, or the date on which a school district's or charter school's respective collective bargaining agreement that is operative on January 1, 2026, expires, whichever is later. Section 1 shall apply to all academic years after July 1, 2028.

HOUSE DOCKET, NO. 3070 FILED ON: 1/16/2025

Joint Committee on Education

Bill Summary

BILL NUMBER	House, No. 666 / Senate, No. 335
TITLE	An Act promoting safe technology use and distraction-free education for youth
SPONSOR(S)	Representative Peisch of Wellesley and Lipper-Garabedian of Melrose; Senator Julian Cyr
PRIOR HISTORY	N/A
CURRENT LAW	MGL 71 pertains to public schools.

SUMMARY

This bill amends Chapter 71 of the MGL by adding new sections that require each public school to prohibit physical access to personal electronic devices on school grounds during school-sponsored activities. This bill also adds regulations for social media platforms regarding default settings for minor users, which seek to limit features that encourage engagement, and specifies non-compliance fines for social media companies who violate these regulations.

HOUSE . . . . . No. 666

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PRESENTED BY:

Alice Hanlon Peisch and Kate Lipper-Garabedian

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 promoting safe technology use and distraction-free education for youth.

PETITION OF:

NAME:	DISTRICT/ADDRESS:	DATE ADDED:
Alice Hanlon Peisch	*14th Norfolk*	*1/16/2025*
Andrea Joy Campbell	*Attorney General*	*1/16/2025*
Nick Collins	*First Suffolk*	*1/27/2025*
Carmine Lawrence Gentile	*13th Middlesex*	*2/3/2025*
Danillo A. Sena	*37th Middlesex*	*2/3/2025*
Jennifer Balinsky Armini	*8th Essex*	*2/18/2025*
Carlos González	*10th Hampden*	*2/24/2025*
Paul McMurtry	*11th Norfolk*	*2/24/2025*
Simon Cataldo	*14th Middlesex*	*3/5/2025*
Sean Garballey	*23rd Middlesex*	*3/7/2025*
Jay D. Livingstone	*8th Suffolk*	*4/8/2025*
David T. Vieira	*3rd Barnstable*	*5/27/2025*

HOUSE DOCKET, NO. 3070 FILED ON: 1/16/2025

HOUSE . . . . . No. 666

By Representatives Peisch of Wellesley and Lipper-Garabedian of Melrose, a petition (accompanied by bill, House, No. 666) of Alice Hanlon Peisch, Andrea Joy Campbell and others relative to the use of personal electronic devices on school grounds. Education.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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

An Act promoting safe technology use and distraction-free education for youth.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:

SECTION 1. Chapter 71 of the General Laws, as amended by section 2 of chapter 118 of the acts of 2024, is hereby further amended by adding the following 2 sections:-

Section 101. Each public school shall have a policy regarding the use of personal electronic devices on school grounds and during school-sponsored activities to reduce distractions, maintain environments focused on learning and protect the privacy and safety of students and staff. Each public school shall notify the parents or guardians of all students attending the school of the policy. The policy shall include, but not be limited to, a prohibition on physical access to a personal electronic device by students during the school day as defined by the board of elementary and secondary education pursuant to section 1G of chapter 69 unless: (i) authorized by a school administrator to address the needs of an individual student; (ii) when used in accordance with an individualized education program or an education plan implemented pursuant to section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, 29 U.S.C. § 701 et seq.; or (iii) during an emergency. For the purposes of this section, a “personal electronic device” shall mean a smart

phone, mobile phone, tablet, computer, smartwatch or other electronic device not owned or provided to a student by a public school that is capable of communication through the internet or a wireless network.

The policy and any standards and rules enforcing the policy shall be prescribed by the school committee in conjunction with the superintendent or the board of trustees of a commonwealth charter school.

The department of elementary and secondary education shall, in consultation with the attorney general's office and the department of public health, provide guidance and recommendations to assist schools with developing and implementing effective policies regarding the use of personal electronic devices on school grounds and during school-sponsored activities consistent with this section and shall make such guidance and recommendations publicly available on the department's website. Guidance and recommendations may be reviewed and regularly updated to reflect applicable research and best practices.

Each school district and charter school shall file its school personal electronic device use policy with the department of elementary and secondary education in a manner and form prescribed by the department.

Section 102. Each public school shall have a policy regarding the education of its students about the social, emotional and physical risks and harms of social media use. The school shall notify the parents or guardians of all students attending the school of the policy and shall post the policy on the school's website. The policy, and any standards and rules enforcing the policy, shall be prescribed by the school committee in conjunction with the superintendent or the board of trustees of a charter school.

The department of elementary and secondary education, in consultation with the attorney general's office and the department of public health, shall provide guidance and recommendations to assist schools with developing and implementing effective social media use education policies and shall make such guidance and recommendations publicly available on the department's website. Guidance and recommendations may include, but shall not be limited to, curriculum resources, guidance on developing community norms regarding cell phone and social media use, guidance for educating parents or guardians on managing their child's social media use and recognizing warning signs of the harmful effects of social media use and other available resources. Guidance and recommendations may be reviewed and regularly updated to reflect applicable research and best practices.

Each school district and charter school shall file its social media use education policy with the department of elementary and secondary education in a manner and form prescribed by the department.

SECTION 2. The General Laws are hereby amended by inserting after chapter 93L the following chapter:-

CHAPTER 93M

ONLINE PROTECTION

Section 1. As used in this chapter, the following words shall, unless the context clearly requires otherwise, have the following meanings:

"Account", a unique profile for a user of a social media company.

"Algorithmic ranking system", means a computational process, including a process derived from algorithmic decision making, machine learning, statistical analysis or other data

processing or artificial intelligence techniques, used to determine the selection, order, relative prioritization or relative prominence of content from a set of information that is provided to a user on a social media platform, including search results ranking, content recommendations, content display or any other automated content recommendation method.

"Content", text, image or video created, shared or viewed through a social media platform.

"Connected account", an account directly connected to another account by affirmative request or affirmative confirmation by the users of both accounts.

"Social media feed", the presentation of content to users of a social media platform that has been recommended, selected or prioritized for presentation based on an algorithmic ranking system or other information associated with the user's account.

"Social media platform", a public website, online service, online application or mobile application that displays content primarily generated by users and allows users to create, share and view user-generated content with other users. "Social media platform" shall not include email, cloud storage, SMS, MMS, RCS, or similar text messaging telecommunications services or document viewing, sharing or collaboration services.

"Minor", an individual who is under 18 years of age.

"User", an individual who accesses or uses a social media platform through an account.

"Parent", a parent or legal guardian.

Section 2. (a) A social media platform shall implement an age assurance or verification system to determine whether a user on the social media platform meets age requirements to use

the platform under applicable law. The age assurance system shall consist of the best technology available in the age assurance and verification industry with measures reasonably calculated to accurately identify a current or prospective user's age and determine the proper level of access to the social media platform's features pursuant to this chapter with 99 per cent accuracy.

(b) A social media platform shall implement a review process to allow users to appeal the social media platform's age designation by submitting documentary evidence over the internet to establish that the user is not a minor and shall review the documentary evidence submitted and make a determination on the appeal within 3 days.

(c) Any data or information gathered by the social media platform for use in the age assurance system, or during any appeal of the age assurance system's determination, shall be segregated by the social media platform and remain confidential. The data and information gathered for use in the age assurance system, or during any appeal of the system's determination, shall not be used for any other purpose by the social media platform.

Section 3. (a) Upon determination that an account belongs to a minor user, a social media platform shall set the default settings of the minor user to ensure a heightened level of privacy and limit the use of features that prolong minor engagement with the social media platform. The default settings shall include, but not be limited to:

(i) restricting the visibility of the minor user's account to only connected accounts;

(ii) limiting the minor user to only sharing content with connected accounts;

(iii) limiting the minor user to only direct messaging with connected accounts;

(iv) enabling a social media feed that only presents content chronologically;

(v) disabling autoplay functions that continuously present content to a user;

(vi) disabling continuous scrolling or pagination functions that present continuous content as the user continues to scroll a social media feed;

(vii) disabling notifications to the minor user concerning a social media feed between the hours of 10:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m. and between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m.;

(viii) restricting a minor user from accessing the social media platform between the hours of 10:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m. and between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m.;

(ix) restricting a minor user from accessing the social media platform for more than 1 ½ cumulative hours of use in any 24 hour period;

(x) restricting a minor user from accessing the social media platform for 10 minutes after 20 minutes of continuous use.

(b) The default settings of a minor user of a social media platform who is 15 years old or younger provided in clauses (ix) and (x) of subsection (a) may be changed with parental consent pursuant to section 5; provided, however, the parent may not increase access pursuant to clause (ix) to more than 2 hours in any 24 hour period and the parent may not increase continuous use pursuant to clause (x) to more than 30 minutes before 10 minutes of inaccessibility.

(c) The default settings of a minor user of a social media platform provided in clauses (ix) and (x) of subsection (a) may be changed by a minor user who is 16 or 17 years old; provided, however, the minor user may not increase access pursuant to clause (ix) to more than 2 hours in any 24 hour period and the minor user may not increase continuous use pursuant to clause (x) to more than 30 minutes before 10 minutes of inaccessibility.

(d) A social media platform shall restrict from public visibility a minor user's account within 1 hour of receiving a request for a restriction by a parent of a minor user 15 years old or younger or by a minor user and shall delete a minor user's account within 3 days of receiving a request for a deletion by a parent of a minor user 15 years old or younger or by a minor user. Any restriction or deletion pursuant to this subsection shall include all information and material made publicly available by the minor user on the social media platform. Nothing in this subsection shall require a social media platform to contravene any federal or state law or regulation or require a social media platform to delete information subject to a law enforcement investigation.

(e) A social media platform shall provide a conspicuous tool with each item of content to allow a minor user the ability to flag or otherwise indicate that the minor user found the content to be unwanted or harmful.

(f) A social media platform shall present a warning to minor users on the negative effects of social media use on social, emotional and physical health. The warning shall be presented to a minor user upon account activation and every 30 days thereafter and shall require the minor user to acknowledge the warning before proceeding to use the social media platform.

Section 4. (a) A social media platform shall publicly and conspicuously post the following information on the social media platform's website:

(i) data and information on how the social media platform tracks platform use by minor users including, but not limited to:

(1) any tracking by the social media platform on the number of times for each mode of interaction that a minor user interacts with other accounts in an hour, day, week and month; and

(2) whether and how the social media platform engages in any limitations in the ability of minor users to engage in account interactions;

(ii) data and information on whether and how the social media platform:

(1) assesses the relevance of content on the platform to the preferences of a minor user; and

(2) assesses minor users' expressed preferences regarding content;

(iii) statistics on the platform's use by minor users for each distinct type of account interaction or engagement, including but not limited to:

(1) sending invitations or messages to other platform users;

(2) commenting on content;

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(4) liking content;

(5) voting for content;

(6) reacting to content;

(7) posting new minor user-generated content;

(8) disseminating minor user-generated content to other platform users; and

(9) time spent on the platform by minor users;

(iv) data and information on when and how often notifications are sent to a minor user and how the social media platform determines when to send a notification to a minor user; and

(v) a description of all product experiments that have been conducted on 1,000 or more minor users of the social media platform, including a description of the experimental conditions and the results of the product experiment for all experimental conditions on users' viewing or engaging with content that:

(i) minor users indicate to be of high or low quality;

(ii) minor users indicate complies or does not comply with the users' expressed preferences;

(iii) minor users indicate is harmful or unwanted; or

(iv) minor users indicate violates platform policies.

(b) Every 7 days the social media platform shall survey minor users to determine whether, and to what extent, the minor user had experienced unwanted or harmful activity on the social media platform. The social media platform shall collect the surveys required pursuant to this subsection and any data concerning the flagging of unwanted or harmful content pursuant to subsection (e) of section 3 and make the surveys and data publicly available.

Section 5. Nothing in this chapter shall be construed as requiring a social media platform to provide a parent any additional or special access to or control over the data or accounts of their minor user child; provided, however, the social media platform may provide a parent access to the account of a minor user child for the purposes of obtaining consent pursuant to section 3.

Section 6. A violation by a social media platform of the provisions of this chapter shall be deemed an unfair or deceptive act or practice in trade or commerce under the provisions of chapter 93A. A violation of section 2 or section 3 shall be punished by a civil fine of not more than $5,000 per violation. Each user affected by a violation of section 2 or section 3 shall be

considered a separate violation under this section. A violation of section 4 shall be punished by a civil fine of not more than $1 million. Each day that a violation of section 4 occurs shall be considered a separate violation under this

SENATE . . . . . No. 335

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PRESENTED BY:

Julian Cyr

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 promoting safe technology use and distraction-free education for youth.

PETITION OF:

NAME:	DISTRICT/ADDRESS:	
Julian Cyr	*Cape and Islands*	
Andrea Joy Campbell	*Attorney General*	
Nick Collins	*First Suffolk*	*1/28/2025*
Barry R. Finegold	*Second Essex and Middlesex*	*2/13/2025*

SENATE DOCKET, NO. 654 FILED ON: 1/14/2025

SENATE . . . . . No. 335

By Mr. Cyr, a petition (accompanied by bill, Senate, No. 335) of Julian Cyr, Andrea Joy Campbell, Attorney General , Nick Collins and Barry R. Finegold for legislation to promote safe technology use and distraction-free education for youth. Education.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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

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considered a separate violation under this section. A violation of section 4 shall be punished by a civil fine of not more than $1 million. Each day that a violation of section 4 occurs shall be considered a separate violation under this section.