

## Joint Committee on Higher Education

### Bill Summary

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**BILL NUMBER:** H.1426

**TITLE:** An Act to provide green and healthy public colleges and universities and address their deferred maintenance needs

**SPONSORS:** Rep. Manny Cruz (Salem), Rep. Aaron Saunders (Belchertown)

**HEARING DATE:** June 3rd, 2025

**REPORTING DEADLINE:** August 2nd, 2025

**PRIOR HISTORY:** New file

**SIMILAR MATTERS:** S.949 (Sen. Jacob Oliveira).

**CURRENT LAW:**

*M.G.L. c. 15A — Public Education*

*M.G.L. c. 29 — State Finance*

**SUMMARY:**

This bill adds a new section to Chapter 15A establishing a “Green and Healthy Public College and University Building Planning Commission”. Membership would consist of the commissioners of higher education and public health, legislative leadership and chairs of relevant committees, and representatives from the community colleges, state universities, UMASS system, teachers’ unions, Massachusetts State Building Trades Council, American Institute of Architects-Massachusetts, Massachusetts Coalition for Occupational Safety and Health, and the Department of Higher Education’s Student Advisory Council.

The commission shall be reestablished every 10 years to monitor the implementation of its work and conduct assessments as necessary. The commission shall evaluate and make recommendations for public higher education buildings related to energy efficiency, safety, accessibility, health, and environmental quality. The commission shall also assess whether public higher education buildings are healthy enough to promote effective learning, are energy efficient, and limit exposure to toxic materials or adverse health effects. The commission shall also “develop standards for green and healthy public higher education buildings”. Members of this commission will not be compensated but can be reimbursed for reasonable expenses.

The bill also adds a new section to Chapter 29 creating a “Public College and University Capital Debt Relief Fund” to be administered by the Board of Higher Education. The fund may be credited with appropriations or other money transferred by the General Court, donations, and earned interest. Funds shall be used, without appropriation, to provide financial relief for debt service associated with capital construction costs. Public higher education institutions are required to use savings from this debt relief to

invest in hiring full-time faculty and staff, providing pay or benefit increases for adjunct faculty, and student success programming and supports.

The bill also creates a Green and Healthy Public College and University Building Fund, also to be administered by the Board of Higher Education. The fund may be credited with appropriations or other money transferred by the General Court, donations, and earned interest. Amounts credited to the fund shall be used to carry out the recommendations of the Green and Healthy Public College and University Building Planning Commission and to ensure that new and existing buildings meet the recommended green and healthy building standards.

The bill requires that starting in 2027, construction of all “academic, administrative, or auxiliary” buildings on public college campuses will be paid for in full by the state. No construction projects shall be financed with institutional funds or through public building authorities or private entities. All costs associated with deferred maintenance at institutions under the supervision of the Department of Capital Asset Management and Maintenance shall be paid in full by the state.

Finally, the bill requires the Green and Healthy Public College and University Building Planning Commission to develop a plan for all public higher education buildings to be brought into compliance with the standards it promulgates by 2037. This plan shall recognize the unique conditions of each building, historic patterns of injustice, prioritize buildings with the greatest needs first, assess costs, recommend funding sources, and incorporate expected long-term savings and growth in economic activity. The Green and Healthy Public College and University Building Planning Commission shall also conduct hearings at all public institutions of higher education and consult employee organizations and shall submit its plan to the legislature by the end of 2028.