

**Joint Committee on Higher Education Bill  
Summary**

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<b><u>BILL NUMBER</u></b>	S.923
<b><u>TITLE</u></b>	An Act relative to college in high school
<b><u>SPONSORS</u></b>	Senator Crighton
<b><u>SIMILAR MATTERS</u></b>	H.1455
<b><u>PRIOR HISTORY</u></b>	H.693 of the 2021/2022 legislative session was redrafted and reported out of the Joint Committee on Education (See. H.4644); H.4644 was reported to House Ways and Means; recommended ought to pass with amendment (See. H.5056); H.5056 was engrossed in the House; Sent to Senate Ways and Means; no further action. S.818 and H.1286 of the 2023/2024 Legislative Session were given a favorable report with a redraft by the Joint Committee on Higher Education (see H.4521); H.4521 was sent to House Ways and Means; no further action.

**SUMMARY**

This bill requires FAFSA completion by all high school students and makes ‘college in high school’ program students eligible to receive state financial assistance through needs-based full or partial scholarships. It creates the College in High School Trust Fund to strengthen ‘college in high school’ programming for underserved communities, the Office of College in High School to oversee all ‘college in high school’ programs, and the College in High School Joint Committee to oversee the Office. The bill requires all high schools to offer at least one affordable ‘college in high school’ program, which may receive funding from the Twenty-First Century Education Trust Fund, and to create agreements with institutions to facilitate transfer pathways. It also requires higher education institutions to develop policies to accept AP scores, IB diploma programs, and dual enrollment courses as course satisfaction.

**SECTION-BY-SECTION**

**Section 1:** Amends section 9B of chapter 15A to make residents participating in ‘college in high school’ programs eligible for the Commonwealth’s needs-based financial assistance program.

**Section 2:** Amends section 16 of chapter 15A to make residents participating in ‘college in high school’ programs eligible for the Commonwealth’s general scholarship program.

**Section 3:** Inserts section 39A into chapter 15A;

(a) Requires all public higher education institutions to develop policies that determine how to accept the completion of college in high school courses, advanced placement (AP) exams, IB diploma programs, or dual enrollment courses for the purpose of satisfying degree requirements. The policy must include:

- (1) Minimum scores required on AP and IB examinations
- (2) Whether credit will be granted for major or elective requirements, and
- (3) How to transfer these credits between higher education institutions.

(b) By an applicant for admission's request, institutions must use applicant-provided information to determine and provide:

- (1) The amount and type of credits that may be granted, and
- (2) Any other academic requirements that may be satisfied.

(c) An institution must post, under the category of admission on their website, their policies regarding credit awards. They must also submit these policies and any changes to DHE; DHE must post all institution's policies on their website.

(d) The Board of Higher Education shall file annual reports with the Legislature after reviewing college in high school-course granting policies of all institutions.

**Section 4:** Inserts section 2DDDDD into chapter 29;

(a) Creates the Massachusetts College in High School Trust Fund, administered by DESE in consultation with DHE.

(b) Funds may be expended to focus on strengthening college in high school programming for underserved communities.

(c) The DESE commissioner shall approve funds from private sources before being deposited to ensure no conditions that may be detrimental to neutral education policies may be imposed.

(d) The commissioner shall submit annual reports to the Legislature on funding amounts.

**Section 5:** Inserts section 37 into chapter 69;

(a) Creates the Massachusetts Office of College in High School, under DESE and DHE, to administer high school programs expanding access to and increasing success rates in college and postsecondary opportunities and to oversee all college in high school programs.

All programs created under this initiative must:

- (1) Have courses that allow a student to earn a high school diploma AND
  - are transferable college credits,
  - industry-recognized in credentials, or
  - certificates/participation in apprenticeship programs,
- (2) Prepare students for future success in the workforce or higher education,
- (3) Encourage shared resources between schools, higher education institutions, and employers,
- (4) Emphasize parental involvement and provide consistent counseling,
- (5) Develop early identification methods for middle grade students and provide outreach to them, and
- (6) Identify and engage underserved populations.

(b) The Office shall oversee any college in high school programs that involve **early college, dual enrollment, occupational credentials, AP course, IB programs**, etc. The office shall develop and may refine college in high school program designations. Higher education

institutions must agree for a course to count for college credit.

(c) All high schools shall offer an affordable college in high school program as described in (b) to students before the completion of 12th grade.

(d) Creates the College in High School Joint Committee to develop recommendations on college in high school programs and identifies the required committee members. These recommendations shall include:

- Efforts to expand college in high school programs
- Promoting program performance requirements and target enrollments
- Identifying new programs

(e) The Office must create and annually revise the charges and costs associated with credit-earning courses at higher education institutions by considering factors such as (1) how many colleges offer the course, (2) where the course is offered, (3) any extra enrollment associated costs, and (4) minimum numbers of participating students.

(f) The Office may develop recommendations for programs to extend and expand graduation requirements to be able to complete certificates, degrees, or credits as high school students for the purposes of chapter 70 calculations.

(g) The Office shall submit to DESE a proposed budget.

(h) Programs shall be open to all students and shall not discriminate, on a space available basis. Lotteries should be used to choose students if necessary.

(i) The Office shall establish standards for approving the designation of a college in high school program.

(j) College in high school programs shall enter into agreements with at least one postsecondary institution to create a transfer pathway and should work together on automatic credit transfers, reducing barriers, the high school's duties, and funding sustainability.

(k) All programs are designated for five years initially, subject to performance reviews after the first 3 years, and may be renewed. DESE may provide additional funding as necessary.

(l) All programs must file reports with DESE and DHE detailing specified performance measures; DESE and DHE commissioners shall prepare an aggregate report with this information for the Legislature.

(m) The Office must propose multi-year goals related to this initiative.

(n) The Office shall create an online and accessible dashboard using the performance reports that displays the success of individual programs in achieving their goals.

**Section 6:** Inserts section 98 into chapter 71;

Requires all public high school students to complete and submit a FAFSA or Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority application unless their parent or guardian, or the student if 18 years or older, declines in writing.

**Section 7:** College in high school programs may receive funds from the Twenty-First Century Education Trust Fund.

**Section 8:** The first annual report is due Dec 31, 2027.