

**Joint Committee on Higher Education Bill  
Summary**

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<b><u>BILL NUMBER</u></b>	S.929
<b><u>TITLE</u></b>	An Act relative to debt-free public higher education
<b><u>SPONSORS</u></b>	Senator Eldridge
<b><u>SIMILAR MATTERS</u></b>	H.1436
<b><u>PRIOR HISTORY</u></b>	S.744 of the 2019/2020 Legislative Session was placed in a study, no further action; S.829 of the 2021/2022 Legislative Session was redrafted and reported out of the Joint Committee on Higher Education (See. S.2812), S.2812 was sent to Senate Ways and Means, no further action. S.823 of the 2023/2024 Legislative Session was reported ought not to pass by the Joint Committee on Higher Education.
<b><u>SUMMARY</u></b>	This bill declares free public higher education as a right for all residents of the Commonwealth. The bill mandates the creation of a grant program to pay for tuition and fees for eligible students that will not replace or affect eligibility for financial aid provided through the FAFSA. The Board of Higher Education must provide annual notice of eligibility and maintain a database of eligible students. All public higher education and public vocational training institutions are eligible institutions under this program.

**SECTION-BY-SECTION**

**Section 1:** Amends section 1 of chapter 15A to declare free public higher education as a right for all residents.

**Section 2:** Inserts section 46 after section 45 of chapter 15A;

(a) Defines the “Board” as the Board of Higher Education. Defines “eligible students” as those enrolled full-time or part-time at MA public colleges, universities, or other public certificate, vocation, or adult education programs other than nonimmigrant aliens. “Eligible students” must have attended a Commonwealth high school for 3 or more years and graduated from a Commonwealth high school, or attained the equivalent from an adult basic education program in the Commonwealth, or currently qualify for in-state tuition under federal regulations.

(b) Mandates the Board to create a grant program to pay tuition and fees for eligible students. Students eligible for the Pell Grant will receive additional grants for additional costs of

attendance.

(c) Clarifies that this grant should not replace aid through FAFSA and this program should not affect eligibility for FAFSA.

(d) Provides that all public higher education and public vocational training institutions are eligible for this program and there will be no restriction on a student's choice of academic programs.

(d) Requires the Board to provide annual notice of eligibility to all eligible students and maintain a database of those currently or potentially eligible.