

HOUSE No. 399

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PRESENTED BY:

Paul R. Heroux

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 establish a pilot study grant award for strengths-based prevention of bullying events in schools with moderate to high rates of bullying events.

PETITION OF:

NAME:

Paul R. Heroux

DISTRICT/ADDRESS:

2nd Bristol

HOUSE No. 399

By Mr. Heroux of Attleboro, a petition (accompanied by bill, House, No. 399) of Paul R. Heroux relative to establishing a pilot study grant award for strengths-based prevention of bullying events in schools with moderate to high rates of bullying events. Education.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

**In the One Hundred and Eighty-Ninth General Court
(2015-2016)**

An Act to establish a pilot study grant award for strengths-based prevention of bullying events in schools with moderate to high rates of bullying events.

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

1 SECTION 1.

2 To provide for the operation of the executive office of the department of elementary and
3 secondary education the sum set forth in section 2, for the purposes and subject to the conditions
4 specified in section 2, is hereby appropriated from the General Fund unless specifically
5 designated otherwise, subject to the provisions of law regulating the disbursement of public
6 funds and the approval thereof.

7

8 SECTION 2.

9 EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE DEPARTMENT OF ELEMENTARY AND

10 SECONDARY EDUCATION

11 8100-XXXX For a grant program to be known as the Strengths-Based Bullying
12 Prevention Pilot program established pursuant to and conditioned on the requirements set forth in
13 a Chapter 284 relating to gun violence prevention and citing a earlier legislation from Chapter
14 69, Section 10, Subsection 1P/(ii) regarding safe schools and support for traumatized students,
15 \$690,000

16

17 SECTION 3.

18 Chapter 6 of the General Laws, as appearing in the 2010 Official Edition, is hereby
19 amended by inserting after section 116F the following section:-

20 116G.

21

22 (a) As used in this section, the following words shall have the following meanings:
23 “Grant contract”, contract awarded in accordance with this section to 15 schools and a vendor(s)
24 by the Massachusetts Department of Education, through the Office of External Partnerships
25 and/or the Office of Tiered System of Supports. “MASS DOE”, the Massachusetts Department
26 of Education

27 “School bullying events”, intermediate-level school threats by means hateful or
28 insensitive behavior towards a person, group, or gender. “Pilot study grant for strengths-based
29 reduction of bullying events in schools” or “Pilot program” or “Grant”, grant awarded by EOPSS
30 to 15 qualifying schools to fund a grant contract. “Moderate to high rates of bullying events”,
31 annual rate of documented bullying events in schools defined as moderate to high if greater than

32 20% of school population as set forth individually from each applicant school. “Documented
33 bullying events”, negative interpersonal behavior between students or from students to adults
34 (teasing, bullying, fighting, name-calling, and related events) which result in referrals that school
35 keeps track of on a monthly basis, both in twelve months preceding grant award and during the
36 award “Strengths-Based methodology”, a way to work with students so as to develop and nurture
37 their strongest capabilities. This stands in stark contrast to focusing on the weaknesses or failures
38 of students. Strength-Based methodology is currently used with leaders, including school leaders,
39 and is similarly beneficial for students including distressed students. “Strengths-Based Bullying
40 Prevention Pilot” or “SBBPP”, proposal submitted by a qualifying school to be reviewed by the
41 Office of External Partnerships (OEP) and/or Office of Tiered System of Supports (OTSS) in the
42 Massachusetts Department of Education, for purposes of awarding a grant contract. “Qualifying
43 school”, a school meeting 1 of 5 criteria set forth in subsection (c). “Request for proposals” or
44 “RFP”, request or announcement by the MASS DOE to solicit SBBPPs from schools.
45 “Relationship manager”, a person offering strategic intervention services at a school-level as
46 detailed by subsection (d) to nurture strengths in potentially distressed students and reduce
47 bullying incidences.

48 (b) The OET and/or OTSS shall establish a SBBPP grant award for the reduction of
49 bullying events to 15 schools for the purpose of recruiting and training school-level relationship
50 managers to reduce bullying events in pilot schools.

51

52 (c) Using referrals and suspensions data from the most recent complete year available
53 (the previous 12 calendar months), a school may apply for a moderate to high level of bullying
54 events prevention grant if there were:

55 (i) referral / suspension rates calculated for each month of previous 12 calendar months
56 aggregated to the individual student level and offense type (i.e. able to depict presence of
57 repeated bullying events);

58 (ii) referral / suspension data at the local level aggregated to include student ethnicity and
59 gender (to depict disproportion and equity based on ethnicity and gender);

60 (iii) published school discipline rates of greater than 4.5%, which is the Massachusetts'
61 school-level state average for students disciplined, as defined by the average of Column D of the
62 SSRD Resource Online

63 (iv) school commitment to track referral and suspension data for the months of the
64 potential grant award and store locally (to be submitted monthly by school grant administrator);

65 (v) school commitment to not turn away from offering school-level supports in every
66 instance of bullying and related behavior.

67

68 (d) A school that qualifies pursuant to subsection (c) may apply for a grant which would
69 pay for a PTE staff member to be named as a "Relationship Manager" for 6 months, who will
70 work at the school level for 30-32 hours per week, with work duties to be set forth in subsection

71 (e). A potential relationship manager (RM) will meet one or more of the following qualifications

72 (i) Will be a former or displaced educator,

73 (ii) Will be a former or current military service member who is committed to education
74 and helping students improve

75 (iii) Has demonstrated understanding of the ideology of offering tiered system of supports
76 to students based upon need

77 (iv) Has demonstrated interest in nurturing strengths in distressed or at-risk students

78

79 Alternatively, a potential school may choose to reassign a current staff member as a RM
80 for the grant period. This is permissible under the grant as long as the RM's 30 hours per week
81 during the grant, as to be set forth in subsection (e), are able to be completed without intervening
82 other duties.

83

84 Also, a school may wish to and/or pay for a PTE staff member RM whom they employ at
85 a deeper level, full-time, both during and/or after the grant as a FTE. It is understandable that
86 schools will aim to increase their own capacity, and if utilizing this grant to add a FTE during a
87 school year is undertaken, it is expected that the RM's 30 hours per week during the grant, as to
88 be set forth in subsection (e), are able to be completed without intervening other duties.

89

90 (e) To be employed as a supervised "Relationship Manager" a potential PTE in a school
91 that is awarded this grant will work for approximately 4 days per week utilizing 6 months of
92 grant funds under the following guidelines. The work of the Relationship Manager will be
93 prescribed by:

94 (i) Work with school leadership to understand strengths and challenges in student
95 behavior / communication such that the RM will be fully under the supervision and leadership of
96 the building principal;

97 (ii) Meet with teachers and paraprofessionals to develop classroom alternatives for
98 negative behaviors through utilizing student strengths;

99 (iii) Interface, interact, and problem-solve with distressed students, both those engaging
100 in negative interpersonal behaviors and those who are recipients of bullying behavior to promote
101 student strengths and positive student interactions;

102 (iv) Determination of an observable reduction, or not, of bullying events through use of a
103 strengths-based framework, the RM will specifically utilize:

104 (1) An equity audit conducted with school leadership and staff members, as defined by
105 social justice framework;

106 (Reference: The work of the Great Lakes Equity Center, Indianapolis, IN)

107 (2) Strength-based methodology for school leaders and teachers;

108 (3) Specialized training in employing strength-based methodology with distressed
109 students to nurture their capabilities;

110 (v) Work week for RM will include 3 to 3 ½ face-to-face hours and added weekly
111 training in an RM group at a rate of ½ to 1 day in group sessions of RMs to align and strengthen
112 their work.

113 (vi) MASS DOE will manage a vendor in training of RM group in both the 4-day RM
114 orientation session and the weekly ½-1 day weekly RM check-in sessions, to be held in
115 regionally-accessible educational facilities.

116 (v) The manner in which the strategic, strengths-based interventions are employed will
117 use an evidence-based approach which has facets including, but not limited to:

118 (1) A weekly accounting of referral and suspension/expulsion events;

119 (2) A weekly accounting of strengths-based services provided to students;

120 (3) Graph of overall discipline events during grant award, to be compared with school
121 discipline event prior to grant award;

122 (vi) The manner in which outcome-based performance metrics shall be assessed by the
123 vendor managed by the MASS DOE shall include:

124 (1) Anecdotal evidence of climate/culture shift among school leaders;

125 (2) Anecdotal evidence of climate/culture shift among teachers;

126 (3) Anecdotal evidence of climate/culture shift among students;

127 (4) Pre-award and post-award evaluations of student discipline events in school, as
128 compared with 15 matched pair schools to be identified by the MASS DOE and tracked prior to
129 grant and at grant end. Matched pair schools will receive no intervention except that the MASS
130 DOE will be performing a mid-year (i.e. 6-month) check of student discipline;

131 (5) Include a description of how a return on investment, or ROI, will be completed;
132 provided, however, that the ROI shall include all primary and secondary cost savings

133 considerations and shall indicate how an opportunity cost will be conducted in the event that the
134 intervention does not produce a successful outcome;

135 (6) Rule out third variables and other confounding variables;

136 (7) Ensure high internal validity; and

137 (8) Describe a scientifically rigorous outcome evaluation design using the experimental
138 design or matched pair research design both of which shall be measured in a way worthy of peer
139 review in a top tier academic research journal.

140 (vii) The manner that a post-review will be completed to determine:

141 (1) What worked;

142 (2) What did not work;

143 (3) What was promising; and

144 (4) Ways to benefit from the knowledge of successes, failures, analysis of external
145 validity, and potentially unresolved outcomes.

146

147 (f) The MASS DOE shall create an RfP for two aspects of the SBBPP that will address
148 the need for a vendor for a full-week Strengths-Based training and for weekly check-in meetings
149 for Relationship Managers that:

150 (i) Is best able to offer an evidence-based solution that will support distressed students;

151 (ii) Is best able to implement an evidence-based solution to train RMs in supporting
152 distressed students;

153 (iii) Is best able to provide a detailed description of how they will track the performance
154 metrics at each school site and manage weekly check-in sessions; or

155 (iv) Has the most relevant experience in offering supports to school personnel in a tiered
156 system of supports that provides assistance related to bullying prevention.

157

158 (g) In accordance with the RfP to be created by the MASS DOE, as described in
159 subsection (f), either a single vendor will be chosen for the orientation and weekly check-in
160 trainings, or two separate vendors will be chosen, whichever is most expeditious in the
161 successful completion of the SBBPP. Potential vendors can include, but are not limited to:

162 (i) The Build Motivation, Great Lakes Training Institute

163 872 Eaton Drive

164 Mason, Michigan 48854

165 (517) 244-0654;

166 (ii) Rachel's Challenge, Non-Profit Organization

167 Denver , Colorado

168 (303) 470-3000;

169 (iii) Other vendors in MASS DOE's approved list of organization that provide supportive
170 services to schools and school personal.

171

172 (h) The amount of the grant awarded to 15 awarded schools and the MASS DOE for
173 administration shall be:

174 (i) \$33,000 for wages for a school RM, for 15 schools (Total: \$465,000)

175 (ii) \$1,000 for school-level administration of an RM (split between HR costs and
176 leadership costs) , for 15 schools (Total: \$15,000)

177 (iii) \$7,500 for development of 4-day PD event to start grant award, to be conducted by
178 trainers from Rachel's Challenge, a strengths-based (3 trainers, \$2,500 each includes all costs,
179 Total: \$7,500)

180 (iv) \$7,500 for ongoing online training of RMs through online courses of Rachel's
181 Challenge (\$500 per RM, Total: \$7,500)

182 (v) \$200,000 for MASS DOE from general funds for overall administration of the
183 SBBPP, including day-to-day functioning, monitoring, and a final public report to be reviewed
184 by the leadership of the MASS DOE. This also includes all indirect costs associated with the
185 management of the SBBPP.

186

187 Total SBBPP Cost: \$690,000