

HOUSE No. 4018

Section 135 contained in the engrossed Bill making appropriations for the fiscal year 2022 for the maintenance of the departments, boards, commissions, institutions and certain activities of the Commonwealth, for interest, sinking fund and serial bond requirements and for certain permanent improvements (see House, No. 4002), which had been returned by His Excellency the Governor with recommendation of amendment (for message see Attachment R of House, No. 4019). July 22, 2021.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

**In the One Hundred and Ninety-Second General Court
(2021-2022)**

An Act establishing a higher education affordability task force.

Whereas, The deferred operation of this act would tend to defeat its purpose, which is to establish a higher education affordability task force, therefore it is hereby declared to be an emergency law, necessary for the immediate preservation of the public convenience.

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. (a) There shall be a task force to evaluate the affordability of public and
2 private higher education options in the commonwealth. The evaluation shall include, but not be
3 limited to, the impact of such affordability on: (i) the financial health and longevity of higher
4 education institutions, including, but not limited to, the future role of small private colleges in the
5 commonwealth; and (ii) the workforce pipeline, including, but not limited to: (A) attracting in-
6 state and out-of-state students to higher education institutions in the commonwealth; (B) keeping
7 students in the commonwealth after graduation; (C) the impact of student debt on career and
8 other financial decisions; and (D) the ability of higher education institutions in the

9 commonwealth to produce a workforce that can meet the employment needs of companies in the
10 commonwealth and specific job sectors in need of specialized training.

11 The task force shall consist of: the commissioner of higher education or a designee, who
12 shall serve as co-chair; the secretary of labor and workforce development or a designee, who
13 shall serve as co-chair; the chairs of the joint committee on higher education; 1 member
14 appointed by the minority leader of the senate; 1 member appointed by the minority leader of the
15 house of representatives; and 12 members appointed by the governor, 1 of whom shall be a
16 student attending a community college in the commonwealth, 1 of whom shall be a student
17 attending a public university in the commonwealth, 1 of whom shall be a student attending an
18 independent institution of higher education in the commonwealth, 1 of whom shall be a
19 representative of the University of Massachusetts recommended by the president of the
20 university, 1 of whom shall be a representative of state universities in the commonwealth
21 recommended by the Massachusetts State Universities Council of Presidents, 1 of whom shall be
22 a representative of community colleges in the commonwealth recommended by the
23 Massachusetts Association of Community Colleges, 1 of whom shall be a representative of
24 private colleges and universities in the commonwealth recommended by the Association of
25 Independent Colleges and Universities in Massachusetts, Inc., 1 of whom shall be a
26 representative of the Associated Industries of Massachusetts, Inc., 1 of whom shall be a
27 representative of the Massachusetts Business Alliance for Education, Inc., 1 of whom shall be a
28 representative of the Massachusetts Teachers Association, 1 of whom shall be a representative of
29 the Public Higher Education Network of Massachusetts Inc. and 1 of whom shall be a
30 representative of the Massachusetts Business Roundtable, Inc. In making appointments, the

31 governor shall, to the maximum extent feasible, ensure that the task force represents a broad
32 distribution of diverse perspectives and geographic regions of the commonwealth.

33 (b) In conducting its evaluation, the task force shall consider: (i) current cost drivers in
34 higher education and the associated impacts on large, medium and small institutions, including,
35 but not limited to, trends in student enrollment and changing demographics; (ii) the existing state
36 requirements to support financial stability in higher education, including, but not limited to, those
37 established in chapter 113 of the acts of 2019, and any changes to improve implementation of
38 those requirements, including changes to said chapter 113; (iii) existing federal laws that limit
39 the ability of higher education institutions to discuss school pricing; (iv) the impact of
40 affordability of higher education on job opportunities and internships; and (v) the impact of the
41 COVID-19 pandemic on the affordability and stability of higher education institutions.

42 SECTION 2. This act shall take effect as of July 1, 2021.