

**HOUSE . . . . . No. 600**

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**The Commonwealth of Massachusetts**

PRESENTED BY:

*Andres X. Vargas and Manny Cruz*

*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 fulfilling the promise of education reform.**

PETITION OF:

NAME:	DISTRICT/ADDRESS:	DATE ADDED:
<i>Andres X. Vargas</i>	<i>3rd Essex</i>	<i>1/19/2023</i>
<i>Manny Cruz</i>	<i>7th Essex</i>	<i>1/19/2023</i>
<i>Sal N. DiDomenico</i>	<i>Middlesex and Suffolk</i>	<i>1/26/2023</i>
<i>James K. Hawkins</i>	<i>2nd Bristol</i>	<i>1/30/2023</i>

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By Representatives Vargas of Haverhill and Cruz of Salem, a petition (accompanied by bill, House, No. 600) of Andres X. Vargas, Manny Cruz and others for legislation to establish a special commission (including members of the General Court) to be known as the promise commission to conduct an ongoing study of all matters concerning education in the 21st century. Education.

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**The Commonwealth of Massachusetts**

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**In the One Hundred and Ninety-Third General Court  
(2023-2024)**  
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An Act fulfilling the promise of education reform.

*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). Whereas, seventeen years after adopting the Education Reform Act of  
2   1993, the legislature acknowledged the need to reflect on the past, revisit the promise, and update  
3   the law to more accurately align with research and trends of a new era. The 2010 Achievement  
4   Gap Act embraced choice opportunities for families in low performing districts, expanded  
5   flexibilities for school leaders and integrated the turnaround expertise of educational  
6   management organizations; and

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8           Whereas today, nearly thirty years after the original Act was signed, it is critical that  
9   leaders reconvene to review the current status and future needs of public education in the  
10   Commonwealth. The question ‘where do we want public education to be in five and ten years  
11   from today?’ must guide the work of these leaders and the answers require a comprehensive

12 examination of issues that were hardly at the forefront of the 1993 agenda. A prescient 2014  
13 DESE report titled “Building on 20 Years of Massachusetts Education Reform” framed the  
14 obligation well: “As we begin our third decade under standards-based education, the  
15 Commonwealth is engaged in the next generation of challenges, no less daunting than the first”;  
16 and

17

18           Whereas, the Pandemic gave rise to ‘the Great Resignation’ in all sectors of the  
19 workforce. The teaching profession has not been immune. While it is difficult to track real-time  
20 turnover numbers, it is evident that a confluence of low morale, insufficient pay, longer hours, a  
21 lack of respect and more robust opportunities elsewhere has created a perfect storm in the  
22 profession. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, “44 percent of public  
23 schools reported teaching vacancies at the start of the 2022-2023 school year, with more than  
24 half due to resignations”; and

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26           Whereas the work ahead must be laser focused on the workforce pipeline, and  
27 specifically, recruitment, retainment and support. In 2023, inclusion, diversity and equity are  
28 terms that apply equally as much to the student population as they do to those who teach  
29 students. Attracting underrepresented populations, including but not limited to those with  
30 disabilities, people of color and first-generation learners; and

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32           Whereas growing the educator pipeline and retaining teachers requires classroom  
33 supports for them. Providing a pathway for professional development, expanding leadership  
34 preparation programs, supporting differentiated learning options and offering wraparound  
35 services to ensure teachers have healthy outlets to manage anxiety and stress are the building  
36 blocks of a happy and successful workforce; and

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38           Whereas providing expanded resources to rapidly grow educator preparation programs is  
39 imperative to meet the dwindling numbers of teachers in the field. Developing and supporting  
40 school leaders coupled with efforts to expand and strengthen supports for classroom teachers  
41 including programs for mid-career professionals and opportunities for teacher coaches; and

42           Whereas an expanded definition of student wraparound services requires a significant  
43 investment of funding and a universal recognition that they are a vital resource to bolster the  
44 resiliency of students, families and caretakers; and

45

46           Whereas standards-based education in the 21st Century has evolved over the last three  
47 decades and today requires empathy, cultural competence, implicit bias awareness and a  
48 commitment to ensuring that all school communities embrace and strengthen each students'  
49 sense of identity.

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51           Therefore, in order to fulfill the promise of education reform, a special commission,  
52 hereafter referred to as The Promise Commission, to revisit the promise, review the past and  
53 redefine the direction is required.

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55           (b) The Promise Commission shall consist of eleven (11) members appointed as follows:  
56 The speaker of the house or designee, the president of the senate or designee, the commissioner  
57 of education, the commissioner of early childhood, the commissioner of higher education, a  
58 member appointed by the Massachusetts association of school superintendents, a member  
59 appointed by the Massachusetts association of school committees, a member appointed by the  
60 Massachusetts affiliate of the American federation of teachers, a member appointed by the  
61 Massachusetts teachers association, a member appointed by the Massachusetts education equity  
62 partnership, and a Massachusetts based member appointed by Latinos for education.

63

64           The Promise Commission shall conduct an ongoing study of all matters concerning  
65 education in the 21stCentury, including a strong emphasis on those outlined in Section (a); and  
66 further, shall be guided by five key elements of empathy: (1) understanding others, (2)  
67 developing others, (3) having a service orientation, (4) leveraging diversity and (5) political  
68 awareness.

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70           The Promise Commission shall have two chairs elected by the members. The chairs may  
71 create issue oriented working groups as they deem necessary.

72

73           The Promise Commission shall meet not less than once per month and shall serve without  
74 compensation.

75

76           The Promise Commission shall develop a comprehensive report containing specific  
77 legislative policy and regulatory recommendations; and further, shall submit its report and  
78 recommendations to the legislature and governor on or before March 31, 2024.