

SENATE No. 2812

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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

SENATE, April 7, 2022.

The committee on Higher Education, to whom was referred the petitions (accompanied by bill, Senate, No. 824) of Joanne M. Comerford, James M. Murphy, Adam J. Scanlon, Patricia A. Duffy and other members of the General Court for legislation to commit to higher education the resources to insure a strong and healthy public higher education system; (accompanied by bill, Senate, No. 829) of James B. Eldridge, Natalie M. Higgins, Maria Duaine Robinson, Brian W. Murray and other members of the General Court for legislation to guarantee debt-free public higher education; (accompanied by bill, Senate, No. 842) of Eric P. Lesser and Diana DiZoglio for legislation relative to the endowment match program; (accompanied by bill, Senate, No. 848) of Mark C. Montigny for legislation to establish the Bridge the Gap Scholarship to universalize access to community colleges; (accompanied by bill, Senate, No. 851) of Michael O. Moore for legislation relative to the Massachusetts State College Building Authority; (accompanied by bill, Senate, No. 852) of Michael O. Moore, Maria Duaine Robinson, Brian M. Ashe and James B. Eldridge for legislation to break generational cycles of poverty; and (accompanied by bill, Senate, No. 1220) of Eric P. Lesser, Patricia A. Duffy, Brian M. Ashe and Joanne M. Comerford for legislation relative to community college tuition, report the accompanying bill (Senate, No. 2812).

For the committee,
Anne M. Gobi

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An Act to establish a Higher Education Review Commission.

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

1 There shall be a special legislative Higher Education Review Commission, herein the
2 commission, established pursuant to section 2A of chapter 4 of the General Laws to review the
3 public system of higher education in the commonwealth and to make recommendations for
4 potential legislative changes as the commission deems appropriate.

5 In conducting its review, the commission shall seek to determine the higher education
6 programs and services necessary to achieve the commonwealth’s goal of expanding access to
7 affordable higher education to help students achieve post-secondary success in the twenty-first
8 century.

9 To assist the commission in carrying out its review, the secretary of education and the
10 commissioner of higher education each shall provide to the commission any data and
11 information the commission considers relevant to its charge.

12 The commission shall include the following members: the chairs of the joint committee
13 on higher education, who shall serve as co-chairs; the secretary of education, or a designee; the

14 commissioner of higher education, or a designee; the speaker of the house of representatives, or a
15 house member designee; the president of the senate, or a senate member designee; the minority
16 leader of the house of representatives, or a house member designee; the minority leader of the
17 senate, or a senate member designee; a representative from the University of Massachusetts as
18 recommended by the Office of the President; a representative of the state universities as
19 recommended by the Massachusetts State Universities Council of Presidents; a representative of
20 the community colleges as recommended by the Massachusetts Association of Community
21 Colleges.

22 The commission may seek input from, to the extent the chairs deem fit, any students,
23 faculty, and staff on our public institutions of higher education; any interest groups that has an
24 interest in our public higher education system; or any other stakeholders the chairs deem fit.

25 In appointing members of the commission, consideration shall be given to race, gender,
26 socioeconomic and geographic diversity that is reflective of landscape of public higher education
27 in the commonwealth and those it serves.

28 The commission shall examine, report on and make recommendations on the full range of
29 issues affecting public higher education quality and financing including, but not limited to: (i)
30 leveraging current efficiencies and reforms, including performance incentive grants and the
31 partnership for collaboration and efficiencies initiative; (ii) analyzing the percentage contribution
32 of the commonwealth to the overall average cost of attendance at an institution of public higher
33 education; (iii) an analysis of current revenue streams and how resources are currently allocated
34 to campuses; (iv) examining the key issues of student financial aid programs, including ways to
35 improve the efficiency and effectiveness of such programs; (v) opportunities to enhance

36 operational efficiencies on our public campuses; (vi) analysis of tuition and fees to ensure a
37 transparent and consumer friendly definition; (vii) re-evaluating financing mechanisms that
38 effect coherent fiscal planning, including, but not limited to, tuition retention and the fiscal
39 structure of continuing education classes; (viii) integrating campus capital planning with
40 operating expenditures, including an itemized review of expenditures of \$50,000 or greater; (ix)
41 evaluating the adjunct faculty to full-time faculty ratio, with a review of the use of adjunct or
42 part-time faculty, adjunct faculty under the current system, the number and use of full-time and
43 tenure-track faculty across the system and the ability of the current system to attract and retain
44 highly qualified faculty and staff; (x) the economic impact COVID-19 has had on public
45 institutions of higher education; and (xi) any other relevant topic the chairs deem necessary.

46 The commission shall hold no fewer than 4 public meetings to seek feedback from the
47 public institutions of higher education, families, employees, students, host communities, and
48 other relevant stakeholders from across the commonwealth.

49 The commission shall, on or before July 1, 2023, report to the general court the results of
50 its investigation and study and its recommendations, if any, together with drafts of legislation
51 necessary to carry its recommendations into effect, by filing the same with the clerks of the
52 house of representatives and the senate, the house and senate committees on ways and means,
53 and the joint committee on higher education.