

**SENATE . . . . . No. 285**

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**The Commonwealth of Massachusetts**

PRESENTED BY:

*Adam Gomez*

*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 relative to dropout prevention and re-engagement.

PETITION OF:

NAME:	DISTRICT/ADDRESS:	
<i>Adam Gomez</i>	<i>Hampden</i>	
<i>Michael J. Barrett</i>	<i>Third Middlesex</i>	<i>1/31/2023</i>

**SENATE . . . . . No. 285**

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By Mr. Gomez, a petition (accompanied by bill, Senate, No. 285) of Adam Gomez and Michael J. Barrett for legislation relative to dropout prevention and recovery. Education.

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[SIMILAR MATTER FILED IN PREVIOUS SESSION  
SEE SENATE, NO. 289 OF 2021-2022.]

**The Commonwealth of Massachusetts**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**In the One Hundred and Ninety-Third General Court  
(2023-2024)**  
\_\_\_\_\_

An Act relative to dropout prevention and re-engagement.

*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. SHORT TITLE

2 This act may be cited as the “Dropout Prevention and Re-engagement Act.”

3 SECTION 2. Section 1B of chapter 69 of the General Laws, as appearing in the 2020  
4 Official Edition, is hereby amended by inserting after the word “attendance”, in line 120, the  
5 following words:- ; provided, however, that all children under the age of 18 shall be required to  
6 attend school if they have not graduated from high school.

7 SECTION 3. Section 1I of chapter 69 of the General Laws, as so appearing, is hereby  
8 amended by inserting, after line 61, the following paragraph:-

9 All individual public schools that instruct students in kindergarten through grade 12 shall  
10 use the early warning indicator index system, or any successor data collection and tracking  
11 system, developed by the department to identify and track students at risk of not graduating on  
12 time; provided that such system shall include a social emotional indicator as one of multiple  
13 measures. Individual public schools shall collect all necessary data required for the use of the  
14 early warning indicator index system, or any successor data collection and tracking system, as  
15 determined by the department. The department shall offer school districts guidance and support  
16 on the collection, review, and use of the early warning indicator index system, or any successor  
17 data collection system, to best serve the needs of students, teachers, and school staff members.  
18 On an annual basis, the department shall compile and analyze the data submitted by individual  
19 schools and shall provide the compiled data and analysis to the applicable school. The  
20 department shall also make aggregated, de-identified data and analysis available to the public  
21 online on an annual basis in a machine readable format. The board may promulgate regulations  
22 relating to the implementation and use of the early warning indicator index system, or any  
23 successor data collection system, consistent with this paragraph. Notwithstanding anything to the  
24 contrary in this section, school districts may use data collection and tracking systems other than  
25 the data collection and tracking system offered by the department, subject to the approval of the  
26 department. School districts seeking to use data collection and tracking systems other than the  
27 data collection and tracking system offered by the department shall apply to the department for a  
28 waiver. The department shall grant a waiver to a school district if it determines that the data  
29 collection and tracking system of the school district meets or exceeds the criteria of the data  
30 collection and tracking system offered by the department. Any such waiver shall be contingent  
31 upon the school district agreeing to submit its data to the department. The school district and the

32 department shall also determine who shall be responsible for compiling and analyzing the data  
33 and the system for categorizing students as at-risk, as required by section 22 of chapter 76.

34 SECTION 4. Section 2 of chapter 70 of the General Laws, as so appearing, is hereby  
35 amended by adding within the definition of “enrollment categories” the following:-

36 (H) “At-risk enrollment”, the number of students between the ages of sixteen and  
37 eighteen enrolled in the district who are identified as “at-risk students” according to the early  
38 warning indicator index system, or any successor data collection and tracking system, as set forth  
39 in section 1I of chapter 69.

40 SECTION 5. Section 1C of chapter 71 of the General Laws, as so appearing, is hereby  
41 amended by adding the following paragraph:-

42 Each school shall conduct, in cooperation with parents and teachers on the school  
43 advisory council, at least one workshop annually for parents and teachers on effective strategies  
44 for involving parents in the education of their child and parental involvement in the education of  
45 at-risk students. Each school district shall provide a model or guidance to its schools on carrying  
46 out the workshops, including, but not limited to, guidance on topics to be covered, outside parties  
47 who may be available to assist in the workshops, and strategies to involve parents with economic  
48 or linguistic barriers to full participation in the school community.

49 SECTION 6. Section 37H of said chapter 71 of the General Laws, as so appearing, is  
50 hereby amended by striking out the first sentence in the third paragraph and inserting in place  
51 thereof the following sentence:-

52 In each school building containing any of the grades six to twelve, inclusive, the  
53 principal, in consultation with the school council, shall prepare and distribute to each student a  
54 student handbook setting forth the rules pertaining to the conduct of students.

55 SECTION 7. Section 1 of chapter 76 of the General Laws, as so appearing, is hereby  
56 amended in line 58 by inserting, after the word “herewith”, the following words:-

57 ; provided that no student, regardless of age, shall face criminal liability or be subject to  
58 criminal penalties for failure to attend school through the mandatory age for school attendance

59 SECTION 9. Said chapter 76 is hereby further amended by adding the following new  
60 section:-

61 Section 22. Massachusetts success coach initiative.

62 As used in this section, the following term shall have the following meaning:

63 “Students-at-risk of dropping out of school” are any students deemed borderline, high  
64 risk, or very high risk, or students that fall under corresponding risk levels in any successor  
65 system, according to the early warning indicator index system used by the department of  
66 elementary and secondary education, or any successor data collection and tracking system, as set  
67 forth in section 11 of chapter 69. For purposes of this act, “students at-risk of dropping out of  
68 school” may also be referred to as “at-risk students.”

69 The Massachusetts success coach initiative shall match at-risk students in grades 7  
70 through 12 who attend schools that qualify for a success coach under this section with success  
71 coaches who will monitor the students’ attendance and provide advice and intervention services,  
72 or connection to intervention services, such as, but not limited to, peer tutoring, credit recovery,

73 and academic remediation. Success coaches shall leverage the resources and assistance of  
74 community organizations working successfully in the field of dropout intervention and re-  
75 engagement. Success coaches shall ensure successful transition of at-risk students from middle  
76 school to high school, connecting these students with the students' new school.

77         The department of elementary and secondary education shall provide resources for  
78 districts to hire and place success coaches in every public middle school and high school that, for  
79 a high school, has a total annual dropout rate of 5 per cent or more and that, for grades 7 and 8,  
80 has a total annual incidence of at-risk students of 5 per cent or more in those grades; provided,  
81 however, that a district shall not receive resources for a school with fewer than 20 students who  
82 fall into the foregoing categories. The department of elementary and secondary education shall  
83 promulgate regulations that set forth an appropriate trigger for success coach resources for  
84 schools with disproportionate dropout rates and incidences of at-risk students for demographic  
85 subgroups. The department of elementary and secondary education shall also promulgate  
86 regulations as to an appropriate coach to student ratio, by which to guide placement of coaches in  
87 the respective schools. Districts that share success coaches shall develop an interagency services  
88 agreement that sets forth such issues as hiring, oversight and supervision, and payment. The  
89 department of elementary and secondary education shall promulgate regulations on what the  
90 agreement shall cover. Nothing herein shall prohibit a school district or districts from partnering  
91 with an external nonprofit agency with experience and proven results in youth development to  
92 staff a success coach in a qualifying school or schools or to train existing staff to be suitable for  
93 the role. The department of elementary and secondary may establish regulations setting forth  
94 criteria for qualifying agencies.

95           The department of elementary and secondary education shall establish employment  
96   qualifications and program design criteria, including guidance department and social services  
97   maintenance of effort guidelines, with which districts must comply as a condition of receiving  
98   funding through the Massachusetts success coach initiative; provided that success coaches shall  
99   meet employment qualifications equal to or greater than minimum state employment  
100   qualifications and shall hold at least a four year bachelor's degree from an accredited institution.  
101   Candidates for employment as a success coach also shall have some past experience working  
102   effectively with youth. Districts that meet these conditions shall have the authority to hire and  
103   place success coaches in qualifying schools. The department of elementary and secondary  
104   education may provide a standardized orientation to success coaches. The responsibilities of  
105   success coaches shall include, but not be limited to, the following: identifying at-risk students;  
106   implementing school wide support interventions; motivating students to focus on a graduation  
107   plan; negotiating extra help for at-risk students; providing academic advice and student support;  
108   developing effective transition programs to aid at-risk students moving between schools;  
109   connecting parents of at-risk students with appropriate school, government, and community  
110   resources; connecting at-risk students with school, government, and community resources;  
111   encouraging parent and community involvement; assisting in the reenrollment of students who  
112   recently left school; serving, where appropriate, as a support for the student and student's parent  
113   or guardian in any disciplinary hearings or actions; and identifying and addressing barriers to  
114   learning resulting from specific risk factors. Districts with high numbers of dropouts may choose  
115   to focus the responsibilities of a coach on outreach and re-engagement of dropouts and students  
116   with five or more absences unexcused.

117           Each school district shall provide the success coach with professional development  
118 opportunities and administrative and technical support in concert with existing district  
119 professional development and administrative and technical support services for district staff.  
120 School districts may partner together to provide professional development opportunities and  
121 administrative and technical support services. The professional development and support  
122 services shall include, but not be limited to: guidance for success coaches on how to best  
123 integrate their work with the efforts of school counselors and school social workers in the  
124 schools and districts in which they are placed so as to achieve efficient and effective provision of  
125 services and to avoid duplication of work, as well as training in trauma-informed practices,  
126 cultural responsiveness, and creating and sustaining health youth-adult relationships in a school  
127 setting. School districts and school administrators shall consider existing needs and programs  
128 when determining the placement of individual coaches. The department of elementary and  
129 secondary education may coordinate and lead annual regional meetings to allow success coaches  
130 to network and share best practices, strategies, and problem solving methods.

131           The success coach shall develop and implement an individualized family engagement  
132 plan for at-risk students to identify and support practical strategies for strong family involvement  
133 in the student's academic life and in the student's school community. Where possible, the  
134 success coach shall make a good faith effort to first meet individually with the student and shall  
135 then convene and develop the plan jointly with the student; his or her parent or guardian or any  
136 other family member or caretaker involved in the student's academic life; and a representative of  
137 the student's school, which may include, but not be limited to, a general education teacher  
138 serving the student, a special education teacher serving the student, or a member of the school's  
139 administrative team. The individualized caregiver engagement plan shall describe each of the



140   aforementioned parties’ responsibilities and expectations for supporting the student’s educational  
141   progress and shall be signed by the parties. The individualized family engagement plan shall,  
142   where appropriate, include referrals to existing resources that may contribute to serving the  
143   student’s and family’s needs, including, but not limited to, services and programming provided  
144   by government and community-based organizations. The individualized family engagement plan  
145   may be developed in conjunction with or as part of an individual student success plan or an  
146   individualized education plan; provided, however, that the individualized family engagement  
147   plan, as required under this section, must be clearly and separately delineated.

148           SECTION 10. The department of elementary and secondary education shall track and  
149   study the impact on levels of parent engagement and academic success of students in an  
150   employer-sponsored pilot program that provides paid leave for employees to participate in  
151   academic activities. Any employer in the commonwealth shall be eligible for the pilot program  
152   and, if interested, shall inform the department of elementary and secondary education of its intent  
153   to participate in the pilot program. The department shall commence said pilot program upon the  
154   availability of a statistically significant number of employer and potential employee participants.  
155   Prior to implementation of a program, the department of elementary and secondary education  
156   and the employer shall enter into an agreement to outline the terms of the program and the  
157   department’s study. The agreement shall specify the amount of time, on an annualized basis, to  
158   be offered to employees and any limitations or conditions on the use of time, including, but not  
159   limited to, requirements for notice, limitations in cases of emergency, and rules for evidence of  
160   attendance at an academic activity. The agreement shall also specify the length of time that the  
161   program shall run and shall outline the data reporting and collection responsibilities of each  
162   party. The agreement shall include a statement that it shall be unlawful for an employer to

163 discharge or discriminate against an employee for taking leave under the program. The  
164 department of elementary and secondary education shall report the results and findings of the  
165 study to the clerks of the house of representatives and the senate within six months of completion  
166 of the study or at the conclusion of the second year of the study, whichever is less, who shall  
167 convey the results and findings to the chairs of the joint committee on education and the chairs of  
168 the joint committee on labor and workforce development.

169 SECTION 11. Chapter 741 of the Acts of 1965 is hereby repealed.

170 SECTION 12. Section 2 shall be effective as of September 1, 2025. From September 1,  
171 2024 until August 31, 2025, all children under the age of 17 shall be required to attend school if  
172 they have not graduated from high school.

173 SECTION 13. Section 3 shall apply commencing the academic school year beginning  
174 2024.

175 SECTION 14. Section 9 shall apply commencing the academic school year beginning  
176 2024.