

**SENATE . . . . . No. 659**

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The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PRESENTED BY:

*Eileen M. Donoghue*

*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 resolve:

Resolve providing for an investigation and study by a special commission relative to a more robust public higher education oversight structure.

PETITION OF:

NAME:	DISTRICT/ADDRESS:
<i>Eileen M. Donoghue</i>	<i>First Middlesex</i>
<i>James Arciero</i>	<i>2nd Middlesex</i>

**SENATE . . . . . No. 659**

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By Ms. Donoghue, a petition (accompanied by resolve, Senate, No. 659) of Eileen M. Donoghue and James Arciero for legislation to provide for an investigation and study by a special commission relative to a more robust public higher education oversight structure. Higher Education.

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The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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

Resolve providing for an investigation and study by a special commission relative to a more robust public higher education oversight structure.

1           Resolved, that a special commission is hereby established to investigate and study  
2 whether a more robust Massachusetts public higher education governance and operations  
3 oversight structure could be beneficial, cost-effective, and efficient for the commonwealth and its  
4 students. The commission shall seek a balance between centralized oversight that can result in  
5 efficiencies and the local autonomy that is necessary to ensure that public institutions in each  
6 region are able to focus on the specific needs of the local community. The commission shall  
7 consist of: the speaker of the house of representatives, or a designee thereof; the president of the  
8 senate, or a designee thereof; the minority leader of the house of representative, or a designee  
9 thereof; the minority leader of the senate, or a designee thereof; the house chair of the joint  
10 committee on higher education, or a designee thereof; the senate chair of the joint committee on  
11 higher education, or a designee thereof; the secretary of education, or a designee thereof; the  
12 commissioner of higher education, or a designee thereof; and 5 persons appointed by the  
13 governor, 1 of whom shall be a representative from the University of Massachusetts; 1 of whom

14 shall be a representative from the commonwealth's universities; 1 of whom shall be a  
15 representative from the commonwealth's community colleges; 1 of whom shall be a  
16 representative from the Public Higher Education Network of Massachusetts; and 1 of whom shall  
17 be a representative from Families United in Educational Leadership.

18           The commission shall make an investigation to determine the need for increased  
19 oversight structure for the commonwealth's public higher education system, including, but not  
20 limited to: 1) an investigation of the causes and effects of rising tuition and fees for public higher  
21 education institutions; 2) an assessment of debt incurred by students attending public higher  
22 education institutions and this debt compares to that incurred by students attending private higher  
23 education institutions; 3) a review of state support for public higher education institutions and  
24 how this support is leveraged to control fee increases; and 4) a determination of whether  
25 increased financial oversight would address the issue of rising costs in commonwealth's public  
26 higher education system.

27           All appointments shall be made not later than 30 days after the effective date of this  
28 resolve. The chairpersons shall meet with the commission not later than 60 days after the  
29 effective date of this resolve. Members shall not receive compensation for their services but may  
30 receive reimbursement for the reasonable expenses incurred in carrying out their responsibilities  
31 as members of the commission.

32           Not later than December 31, 2016 the commission shall report to the general court the  
33 result of its investigation and study and its recommendations, if any, together with drafts of  
34 legislation necessary to carry its recommendations into effect by filing the same with the clerks

35 of the senate house of representatives who shall forward the same to the joint committee on  
36 higher education and the senate and house committees on ways and means.