

**SENATE . . . . . No. 815**

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**The Commonwealth of Massachusetts**

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PRESENTED BY:

***Joanne M. Comerford***

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*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 improving access to affordable community college.**

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PETITION OF:

NAME:

*Joanne M. Comerford*

DISTRICT/ADDRESS:

*Hampshire, Franklin and Worcester*

**SENATE . . . . . No. 815**

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By Ms. Comerford, a petition (accompanied by bill, Senate, No. 815) of Joanne M. Comerford for legislation to improve access to affordable community college. Higher 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 improving access to affordable community college.

*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. Section 19 of chapter 15A of the General Laws is hereby amended by  
2 adding the following paragraph:-

3           Notwithstanding the provisions of this section, tuition and fee waivers under this section  
4 for students attending community college shall include courses that are not state-supported,  
5 including summer sessions, evening classes and online courses.

6           SECTION 2. Chapter 69 of the General Laws is hereby amended by inserting after  
7 section 1T the following section:-

8           Section 1U. (a) Before graduating from high school, each student shall complete and  
9 submit a free application for federal student aid (FAFSA) form.

10           (b) A student shall not be required to comply with subsection (a) if the student’s parent or  
11 guardian, or school counselor submits a signed waiver form indicating that the parent or guardian

12 understands the use and benefits of a FAFSA and declines to complete and submit a free FAFSA  
13 form; provided, that a student over age 18 may sign such waiver on the student's own behalf.

14 (c) The commissioner of the department of elementary and secondary education shall  
15 determine procedures to implement this section, including any forms necessary under subsection  
16 (b). The procedures shall include processes to ensure compliance with federal law regarding  
17 confidentiality of family financial information and student educational information, including the  
18 Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (20 U.S.C. Section 1232g), and any other  
19 state or federal law relating to the privacy of student information. The commissioner shall direct  
20 high schools to provide information to students and parents on the value of completing the  
21 FAFSA form, including an explanation to each high school senior of the state-sponsored  
22 scholarships, financial aid and assistance available to students attending college or post-  
23 secondary education.

24 (d) The department of elementary and secondary education shall work with the office of  
25 student financial assistance of the department of higher education to inform high school students  
26 prior to their senior year on the availability of financial assistance for college and other post-  
27 secondary education and the role of the FAFSA form in accessing the assistance.

28 (e) Each school district shall report to the department of elementary and secondary  
29 education (i) the number of students who completed and submitted a financial aid application  
30 under subsection (a) and (ii) the number of students who received an exception from complying  
31 with subsection (a) under subsection (b). The department shall annually report data collected  
32 under this subsection, along with an analysis of the data, including trends. The report and

33 analysis shall be provided to the secretary of education, the commissioner of higher education,  
34 the joint committee on education and shall be posted on the website of the department.

35 (f) The department of elementary and secondary education shall establish an advisory  
36 committee to advise the department in implementing this section. The advisory committee shall  
37 be composed of persons representing: (i) high school counselors; (ii) high school teachers and  
38 administrators; (iii) high school students and parents; (iv) higher education admissions and  
39 financial aid staff, from all segments of public higher education and private higher education  
40 institutions; and (v) the department of higher education. In implementing this section, the  
41 commissioner shall review the implementation of similar requirements in other states.

42 SECTION 3. The department of higher education, in consultation with department of  
43 elementary and secondary education, the Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority, and  
44 the Massachusetts Association of Community Colleges shall develop materials, including an  
45 informational pamphlet and web site, to inform high school juniors and seniors of affordable and  
46 accessible higher educational opportunities, particularly opportunities at public community  
47 colleges. The materials shall include information highlighting the ease of the application process,  
48 including online applications and applications that do not require an application fee. The  
49 materials shall provide information on the availability of financial aid and the financial aid  
50 application process. The materials shall include a map showing the location of community  
51 colleges in the commonwealth.

52 The materials may include other information as determined by the department of higher  
53 education. In preparing the materials, the department of higher education shall consult with  
54 admissions and financial aid counselors at community colleges and students in high school and

55 community college from various regions of the commonwealth. The online materials shall  
56 include a form to allow students and parents to request further information and provide feedback  
57 regarding the web site.

58           The department of elementary and secondary education shall distribute the materials to  
59 all high school juniors and seniors in the commonwealth.