

HOUSE No. 598

By Ms. Wolf of Cambridge, petition of Alice K. Wolf and others that the Department of Education establish a grant program to reduce class sizes in certain schools in the Commonwealth. Education.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PETITION OF:

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Patricia A. Haddad	Christine E. Canavan
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Michael A. Costello	Michael F. Rush
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Denise Provost	Sarah K. Peake
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Ellen Story	Michael F. Kane
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In the Year Two Thousand and Seven.

AN ACT ENHANCING STUDENT OPPORTUNITY FOR ACHIEVEMENT AND RESULTS.

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

- 1 Chapter 71 of the General Laws, as appearing in the 2004 Official
- 2 Edition, is hereby amended by adding the following section:—
- 3 Section 90. (a) Subject to appropriation, the department shall
- 4 establish a 4 year grant program, Student Opportunity for Achieve-
- 5 ment and Results (SOAR), to assist schools in reducing class size in
- 6 grades kindergarten through 3 to a ratio of 1 teacher to 15-18 stu-
- 7 dents, or, where space is unavailable, to a ratio of 2 teachers to 30
- 8 students, and to study the effects of class size reduction on student
- 9 performance.

10 (b) The department shall develop guidelines and regulations for
11 the administration of the grant program in accordance with the
12 following provisions:—

13 (1) In order for a school district to be eligible, for this program,
14 20 percent or more of the district's students shall be eligible for free
15 or reduced lunch under eligibility guidelines promulgated by the fed-
16 eral government under 42 USC 1758.

17 (2) Each eligible district may apply to the grant program to
18 receive funding for 1 to 3 schools, depending on the number of
19 pupils in the district. Initially, each district with 5,000 pupils or less
20 may apply for 1 school; those with 5,001-10,000 pupils may apply
21 for 2 schools, and those with more than 10,000 pupils may apply for
22 3 schools.

23 (3) In determining which school(s) within an eligible school dis-
24 trict shall implement this program:—

25 (i) The district shall ensure that the school(s) offer an all-day
26 kindergarten program in the year that the grant is distributed; and

27 (ii) The district shall prioritize school(s) that meet one or both of
28 the following criteria:—

29 (A) The school(s) have the highest percentage of students eligible
30 for the free or reduced lunch program within the district

31 (B) The school(s) have been deemed under-performing or chroni-
32 cally under-performing, as under section 1J of chapter 69, as so
33 appearing.

34 (4) In determining which districts shall participate in the program,
35 the department may also consider how the applicant schools plan to
36 use the grant funds in association with existing education programs
37 in order to create an environment for maximum learning opportunity.

38 (5) All schools that participate shall do so for the full 4 years of
39 the program and shall phase-in the program as follows: In the first
40 year of the program, participating schools will reduce all kinder-
41 garten class sizes; in the second year, kindergarten classes will
42 remain at the reduced size and schools will reduce all grade 1 class
43 sizes; in the third year, kindergarten and grade 1 class sizes will
44 remain at the reduced size and participating schools will reduce all
45 grade 2 class sizes; and in the fourth year, kindergarten, grade 1 and
46 grade 2 class sizes will remain at the reduced size and participating
47 schools will reduce all grade 3 class sizes.

48 (6) The department shall assure that the schools have access to
49 department programs that assist in developing or maintaining all-day
50 kindergarten.

51 (7) Schools shall demonstrate every effort to participate in the
52 universal school breakfast program and encourage families eligible
53 for the free and reduced lunch program to register for that program.

54 (8) Teachers in small-sized classes shall receive training and pro-
55 fessional development on instructional strategies to optimize the use
56 of small class size.

57 (c) Grants shall be used to supplement, not supplant, federal, state
58 or local funds for these activities.

59 (d) Program funds shall only be used for hiring of personnel, pro-
60 fessional development, or extra materials for reduced sized class-
61 rooms. For the purposes of this section only, professional
62 development may include per diem payments of substitute teachers
63 when they substitute for a small-sized class teacher who is absent in
64 order to pursue professional development in small class instructional
65 strategies.

66 (e) The department shall establish statewide criteria for profes-
67 sional development that would qualify under clause (8) of subsection
68 (b) of section 90 of the general laws, as so appearing.

69 (f) The department shall contract with a state institution of higher
70 learning to conduct an independent study to measure and compare
71 student performance in small-sized classes with other students of
72 comparable demographics. The department shall submit the study to
73 the joint committee on education, the clerk of the house and the
74 clerk of the senate 5 years after the initiation of the grant program.
75 The department shall assist the institute of higher learning con-
76 ducting the independent study in the data collection.

77 (g) The department may retain 1 percent of the total appropriation
78 in order to administer the program and may expend the amount
79 deemed necessary for conducting the independent study.

80 (h) The department shall report annually on the status of the pro-
81 gram to the joint committee on education by September 1st
82 following each school year of the program.