

# SENATE NO. 290

## **AN ACT** TO IMPROVE DROPOUT PREVENTION AND REPORTING OF GRADUATION RATES

*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. Chapter 76 of the General Laws is hereby amended by inserting after section 1A the  
2 following section:-

3 Section 1B:

4 (a) The General Court finds it necessary to reinforce the Commonwealth's commitment to the National  
5 Governor's Association "Graduation Counts Compact," which seeks to improve collection, analysis,  
6 and dissemination of graduation and dropout data and create a nationwide common, accurate  
7 graduation rate.

8 Further, the General Court finds that the State of Massachusetts shall be committed to maintaining a  
9 data and public reporting system that accurately accounts for all students when calculating high school  
10 graduation rates, and informs the public of progress toward the goal of increasing high school  
11 graduation rates.

12 The General Court finds high-quality data collection and reporting to be accurate, transparent, uniform  
13 (both within districts and statewide) and accessible to many different populations. Further, the  
14 General Court acknowledges the recent implementation of a reporting system by the Department of  
15 Education, in accordance with the NGA's Grant and anticipates the release of the statewide graduation  
16 rate in February 2007.

17 The General Court further finds that increased coordination and collaboration among community-  
18 based organizations, school districts, businesses, higher education institutions, and alternative

19 education programs is necessary to help lower the dropout rate and also increase efforts aimed at  
20 helping those who dropout to re-enroll in education programs.

21 The General Court recognizes that school districts are not in the best position to reconnect dropouts to  
22 school. Workforce Investment Boards, through their Youth Councils or P21 Groups, should lead  
23 recovery efforts with outreach workers dedicated to dropout recovery. Collaborative efforts shall  
24 allow business and community partners to work with school districts to conduct outreach and referral,  
25 and to inform future dropout prevention and recapturing strategies.

26 The General Court also recognizes that the consequences of leaving school early and failing to attain a  
27 diploma are severe and lasting – for those who drop out and society as a whole - and thereby seeks to  
28 reduce the statewide dropout rate by 50% by the year 2012.

29 (b) All school districts throughout the Commonwealth shall be provided with tools for accurate  
30 reporting of graduation rates and dropout data. This data will aid in the Department of Education's  
31 implementation of a longitudinal data collection system and its reporting of graduation rates, including  
32 but not limited to a 4-year graduation rate, 5-year graduation rate, and adjusted graduation rates. This  
33 data shall be disaggregated in the following categories: limited English proficiency, low-income,  
34 special education, race/ethnicity and gender. Data shall be coded within the Student Information  
35 Management System (SIMS) to reflect various withdrawal designations.

36 (c) The Graduation and Dropout Commission shall be established to study dropout prevention and  
37 dropout recovery programs and strategies implemented throughout the Commonwealth. The  
38 Commission will be comprised of business and community leaders, as well as other relevant parties.

39 (d) The Department of Education shall be provided with funds to hire additional analysts dedicated to  
40 collection and comprehensive analysis of graduation and dropout data. The analyses conducted by the  
41 Department will inform future policies to prevent dropouts and improve college readiness.

42 (e) Every school district with a dropout rate greater than 5% shall develop a district-wide action plan  
43 designed to reduce dropout rates and effectively track students. Action plans shall be submitted to the  
44 Department of Education and shall include an outreach and referral strategy as well as a  
45 comprehensive listing of alternative education options offered within the public school system or from  
46 private alternative education providers. Districts shall work with teams of community stakeholders,  
47 including but not limited to Youth Councils and P-21 Teams, to develop a comprehensive approach to  
48 address the dropout issue. The Department shall provide each district with resources and technical  
49 assistance to assist in the development of the plans and enhance the districts' ability to meet the  
50 diverse needs of its student population.

51 (f) There shall be a "Dropout Prevention and Recovery Grant Program," hereinafter referred to as "The  
52 Program." The program shall be administered by the department and shall have the following  
53 purposes:

54 (1) To provide districts with additional funds to implement in-district "early indicator systems"  
55 using strong indicators of dropping out to identify students unlikely to graduate on-time from high  
56 school without receiving school-based support.

57 (2) To create capacity within regions for outreach to dropouts and referral to local school  
58 districts and alternative education programs.

59 (3) To provide funds to programs statewide that offer "alternative routes" to a diploma that  
60 meet the needs to those returning to education. Funds shall be awarded to programs that demonstrate  
61 coordination and collaboration among the following entities: school districts, community-based  
62 organizations, higher education institutions, alternative education programs, and employers.