



**Legislative Advisory Committee Meeting  
Federal Reserve Bank of Boston  
Boston, Massachusetts  
Monday, April 3, 2017**

**New England State Legislative Sessions: Bills Filed, Making College More Affordable**

*(LAC Bill Sponsors Noted in Italics)*

**Connecticut General Assembly**

**HB 6162** (Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee)  
**AN ACT CONCERNING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF A DEBT-FREE PROGRAM FOR STUDENTS ATTENDING PUBLIC HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS**

Directs the Office of Higher Education to conduct a study on the feasibility of implementing a debt-free higher education program for all in-state students attending a public institution of higher education. The study shall include, but not be limited to, (1) an analysis of the implementation of such debt-free higher education program for the regional community-technical college system; (2) an analysis of the implementation of such debt-free higher education program for The University of Connecticut and the Connecticut State University System; and (3) a plan to maximize other financial assistance options available to in-state students attending public institutions of higher education.

*Status – Reported Out of Committee*

**HB 7000** (Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee)  
**AN ACT EQUALIZING ACCESS TO STUDENT FINANCIAL AID**

Section 1. (NEW) (*Effective July 1, 2017*) (a) Beginning in the fall semester of 2018, and for each semester thereafter, in accordance with 8 USC 1621(d), any person who is entitled to classification as an in-state student for tuition purposes, pursuant to section 10a-29 of the general statutes, shall be eligible to apply for and receive, to the extent permitted by federal law, institutional financial aid to attend a public institution of higher education in the state from the funds set aside by the constituent unit, as defined in section 10a-1 of the general statutes. For the purposes of this section, "institutional financial aid" means funds set aside from the anticipated tuition revenue of an institution of higher education for the purposes of providing tuition waivers, tuition remissions, grants for educational expenses, and student employment for residents of the state enrolled as full or part-time matriculated students in a degree-granting program or enrolled in a precollege remedial program and who demonstrate substantial financial need.

*Status – Reported Out of Committee, Joint Favorable Report*

**HB 7234** (Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee)  
**AN ACT CONCERNING FINANCIAL AID FOR STUDENTS IN CRISIS**

Requires public higher education institutions to identify students in crisis and establish policies to provide emergency temporary housing or to allow students in crisis to remain in on-campus housing throughout the year at minimal cost; give priority to students in crisis for summer employment at the institution that

provides housing and require a financial aid administrator to assist students in crisis in applying for financial aid awards, grants, scholarships and other financial resources.

*Status – Reported Out of Committee, Joint Favorable Report*

**HB 7235** (Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee)  
**AN ACT CONCERNING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE OPEN EDUCATION RESOURCES TASK FORCE**

The Office of Higher Education shall establish the Connecticut Open Educational Resource Coordinating Council, which will perform the following functions:

(1) Identify high-impact courses for which open educational resources will be developed, converted or adopted; (2) Establish a program of competitive grants for faculty members of in-state institutions of higher education for the development, conversion or adoption of open educational resources for high-impact courses with funds identified by the committee and within available appropriations; (3) Accept, review and approve Creative Commons attribution license applications for the development of open educational resources, the conversion of printed resources to open educational resources and the adoption of open educational resources from other states by faculty members of in-state institutions of higher education; (4) Administer a standardized review and approval process for the development, conversion or adoption of open educational resources; (5) Establish a state-sponsored digital clearinghouse that shall function as a publically accessible database for the collection, storage and purchase of open educational resources; and (6) Promote strategies for the production, use and access of open educational resources.

*Status – Reported Out of Committee, Joint Favorable Report*

**SB 17** (Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee)  
**AN ACT ASSISTING STUDENTS WITHOUT LEGAL IMMIGRATION STATUS WITH THE COST OF COLLEGE**

Provides for any person who is classified as an in-state student for tuition purposes, to apply for and receive, to the extent permitted by federal law, institutional financial aid to attend a public institution of higher education in the state from the funds set aside by the constituent unit, as defined in section 10a-1 of the general statutes. For the purposes of this section, "institutional financial aid" means funds set aside from the anticipated tuition revenue of an institution of higher education for the purposes of providing tuition waivers, tuition remissions, grants for educational expenses, and student employment for residents of the state enrolled as full or part-time matriculated students in a degree-granting program or enrolled in a precollege remedial program and who demonstrate substantial financial need.

*Status – Reported Out of Committee, Joint Favorable Report*

**SB 838** (Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee)  
**AN ACT CONCERNING ANALYSIS OF MODEL PRIVATELY FUNDED STATE LOAN PROGRAMS**

Authorizes the Student Loan Ombudsman, designated under section 36a-25 of the general statutes, to evaluate how the state can move toward debt-free education and submit a report, in accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a of the general statutes, to the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to banking concerning its recommendations for (1) the feasibility of establishing a program to allow an individual to enter into an income-share agreement, and (2) conduct an analysis of an appropriate commitment factor under such income-share agreement. For the purposes of this section, "income-share agreement" means an agreement between an individual and any other person under which the individual commits to pay a specified percentage of such individual's future income, for a specified period of time, in exchange for payments to or on behalf of such individual for higher education, work force development or other purposes. With respect to income-share agreements, "commitment

factor" means the product of the percentage of such future income to be paid during such period and the number of years under the agreement that future income is required to be paid at such percentage.

*Status – Reported Out of Committee, Joint Favorable Report*

**Maine State Legislature**

**S.P. 23**

*(Sen. Rebecca Millett)*

**RESOLVE TO ESTABLISH THE TASK FORCE TO STUDY HIGHER EDUCATION  
ATTAINMENT AND COMPLETION GOALS**

This resolve establishes the Task Force To Study Higher Education Attainment and Completion Goals. Membership consists of Legislators, representatives of quasi-governmental and business entities, state agency commissioners and one member of the public. The task force's duties include examination and review in the areas of college completion, statewide postsecondary education attainment goals and metrics, college affordability and completion initiatives and college and university support of state policies and strategies to enable college completion and support workforce development.

*Status: Joint Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs*

**S.P. 11**

*(Sen. Rebecca Millett)*

**AN ACT TO INCREASE THE SIZE OF GRANTS UNDER THE MAINE STATE GRANT  
PROGRAM**

Increases the minimum grant amount under the Maine State Grant Program from \$1,000 to \$2,000 subject to the current grant amount modifications under the program.

*Status: Joint Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs*

## **Massachusetts General Court**

### **HB 41**

(State Treasurer)

Notwithstanding any general or special law to the contrary, the University of Massachusetts, in consultation with the office of the state treasurer and the department of higher education, shall develop a pilot program on a single campus that provides enrolled students with an estimate of their total outstanding or pending student loan obligations. Said notice shall include, but not be limited to: (i) an estimate of the total amount of education loans incurred by the student; (ii) an estimate of the total potential payoff amount of the educational loans incurred or a range of the total payoff amount; and (iii) an estimate of the monthly repayment amounts that a similarly situated borrower may incur, including principal and interest, for the amount of loans the student has taken out at the time the information is provided. The University of Massachusetts shall report the results of said pilot program, together with any recommendations regarding whether such a notice should be provided to additional students, to the clerks of the house and senate, who shall forward the same to the joint committee on higher education, not later than July 1, 2018.

*Status: Joint Committee on Higher Education*

### **HB 636**

(Rep. Marc T. Lombardo)

#### **AN ACT RELATIVE TO TUITION FOR U.S. VETERANS**

Provides for any veteran of the United States armed services to be considered a Massachusetts resident for the purpose of admission and tuition expenses for any Massachusetts state college, community college, or state university under the following conditions: the veteran was honorably discharged from the U.S. armed services after at least one year of active service, excluding time spent at a military service academy; the veteran designates Massachusetts as his/her intended domicile, moves to Massachusetts for the purpose of establishing residency, and successfully establishes residency in Massachusetts within one year of matriculation in a Massachusetts public institution of higher learning; failure to successfully meet any of the conditions will result in the Massachusetts state college, community college, or state university revoking discounted tuition rate and invoice the individual the full cost of tuition for any previous enrolled and/or future semesters.

*Status: Joint Committee on Higher Education*

### **HB 633**

(Rep. Carmine Gentile)

#### **AN ACT MAKING PUBLIC HIGHER EDUCATION IN MASSACHUSETTS FREE FOR RESIDENTS OF THE STATES**

Students enrolled in a Massachusetts community college; state university or the University of Massachusetts shall not be charged tuition or mandatory curriculum fees. The Commonwealth will provide free public higher education,

*Status: Joint Committee on Higher Education*

### **HB 639**

(Rep. Paul Mark, Sen. Eileen Donohue)

#### **AN ACT INVESTING IN PUBLIC HIGHER EDUCATION**

- Makes public higher education more affordable for Massachusetts families.
- Creates a Finish Line Grant program that will pay for one year of tuition and fees, other than the first year, for Massachusetts residents.
- Sets eligibility at 175 percent of state median family income, or roughly \$125,000.
- Increases student access to tenure-track faculty.
- Creates a fund and mechanism for increasing the number of tenure-track faculty on public college and university campuses.
- Increases students' ability to interact with teaching faculty outside of the classroom.

- Promotes workplace fairness.
- Provides access to health insurance and state pension options for adjunct faculty who are teaching the equivalent of .5 time or more across all campuses.
- Gives current adjunct faculty notice and priority consideration for these new full-time positions.
- Requires per-course pay parity for adjunct faculty.

*Status: Joint Committee on Higher Education*

**SB 681**

(Sen. James Eldridge)

**AN ACT PROMOTING ACCESS TO DEBT-FREE PUBLIC HIGHER EDUCATION**

Provides for the Commonwealth to pay the tuition and mandatory curriculum fees or course fees not paid by state grants, federal grants, or gift aid through the Free Application for Federal Student Aid process for an eligible student. An eligible student must attend high school in the Commonwealth for not less than 3 years; graduate from a high school in the Commonwealth or attain the equivalent thereof in the Commonwealth; be a resident of the Commonwealth; have an annual family income of \$200,000 or less; apply for federal and state grants and aid via the Free Application for Federal Student Aid process; provided, however, that a person who is not eligible to apply for federal and state grants and aid via the Free Application for Federal Student Aid process shall be exempt from the aid application requirement in this paragraph; be enrolled full-time in a program of higher education at a higher education institution listed in section 5 of chapter 15A, at a per-semester minimum course load of 15 credits; maintain a grade point average of at least 2.7; and not hold a baccalaureate or higher degree granted by a higher education institution listed in section 5 of chapter 15A.

Provides for the Commonwealth to pay the housing and transportation costs for an eligible student whose annual family income is not more than the median income in the Commonwealth as determined by the United States Census Bureau. The board of higher education shall create a formula for payment of housing and transportation costs; provided, however, that the formula shall take into account the living expenses in the area where the student's higher education institution is located.

*Status: Joint Committee on Higher Education*

**SB 7**

(Sen. Mark Montigny)

**AN ACT TO ESTABLISH THE BRIDGE THE GAP SCHOLARSHIP TO UNIVERSALIZE ACCESS TO COMMUNITY COLLEGES**

Establishes the Bridge the Gap Scholarship Program to provide universal access for residents of the Commonwealth to public higher education through accredited degree programs offered at community college institutions. Such assistance shall apply only after all other federal and state financial assistance has been exhausted. To be eligible, students must have obtained a high school diploma, or equivalent, from an institution within the Commonwealth within the preceding two years; maintain a cumulative 2.5 grade point average during their course of study; complete their course of study within three years, and agree to reside and work within the Commonwealth for at least two years after graduation. If a student does not fulfill the above requirements, the scholarship will be converted into a low interest loan to be determined and administered by the Department of Higher Education and Massachusetts Education Financing Authority (MEFA) with exemptions for financial hardship.

Each community college shall annually consult with their Board of Trustees, local workforce development boards, and employers to identify current and future workforce needs within such region. Upon identifying such workforce needs, the college shall certify up to five programs eligible to qualify under the Bridge the Gap Scholarship Program to promote universal access to higher education and workforce readiness. The college shall annually file with the Department of Higher Education those programs certified to receive the Bridge the Gap scholarship. The Department of Higher Education may promulgate regulations to implement this section.

*Status: Joint Committee on Higher Education*

**HB 3000**

(Rep. Sean Garballey, Rep. Natalie Higgins)

**AN ACT TO ESTABLISH A FINISH LINE GRANT PROGRAM TO ENCOURAGE COLLEGE COMPLETION**

Establishes a Finish Line Scholarship Program to provide scholarships to cover the entire cost of tuition and fees for one year other than the first, in a program leading to an associate's or bachelor's degree at a Massachusetts public college or university. Scholarships will be available to residents of the Commonwealth in need of financial assistance whose family income is less than twice the median family income in Massachusetts.

The Department shall establish guidelines governing the program which shall include but not be limited to eligibility requirements, selection criteria (such as acceptable grades and an academic plan for timely degree completion) and other guidelines designed to help meet the department's goals, e.g. increasing overall student success and graduation rates, lowering achievement gaps for high-risk students.

No funds from the scholarship program may be used to pay the tuition or fees for any course or program offered or administered by a non-public entity and no students shall be eligible to receive a scholarship more than one time.

If funds appropriated for this program are insufficient to cover costs of qualified applicants, the department shall hold a lottery to distribute funds for available scholarships provided the funds are distributed equitably to community college, state university and University of Massachusetts students. Funds for this program are meant to supplement and not supplant existing scholarship funds. Funds shall not be derived from existing financial aid programs administered by the Commonwealth.

The department shall provide the Joint Committee of Higher Education a report analyzing the usage, achievement and costs of this program together with recommendations for its future no later than 120 days following the program's first year of operation.

*Status: Joint Committee on Higher Education Office*

**SB 691**

(Sen. Eric P. Lesser)

**AN ACT PROMOTING ACCESS TO HIGHER EDUCATION BEGINNING AT BIRTH**

Establishes a program for investment by the Commonwealth in the future college education of all newly born residents. The Commonwealth shall deposit in a separate account to be maintained by the Massachusetts Education Financing Authority or in the Massachusetts UFund, the sum of \$5,000 for each child born in Massachusetts to Massachusetts residents, and said \$5,000 will be accessible for use by each child for payment used for admission to an institution of higher education in Massachusetts. The department of revenue according to their current exceptions will define exceptions. There will be no tax implications on this initial deposit. Additional deposits to this fund are allowed and will have the same federal and state tax implications as the Massachusetts UFund.

*Status: Joint Committee on Higher Education*

**SB 705**

(Sen. Michael Moore)

**AN ACT RELATIVE TO EARLY COLLEGE HIGH SCHOOLS**

Provides for the commissioners of the department of higher education and department of elementary and secondary education to establish and administer a program, Massachusetts Early College Schools to increase postsecondary completion rates and participation in career pathways.

Public secondary schools receiving such a designation shall provide programs to all enrolled students on a space available basis. There shall be no application fee or tuition charge.

The program shall allow for a minimum accumulation of 12 transferable college credits

Preference shall be given to programs offering at least one career pathway yielding an associate's degree or relevant industrial credential.

*Status: Joint Committee on Higher Education*

**SB 709**

(Sen. Bruce Tarr)

**AN ACT ESTABLISHING THE FINISH LINE SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM**

Establishes a Finish Line Scholarship Program to provide scholarships to cover the entire cost of tuition and fees for one year other than the first, in a program leading to an associate's or bachelor's degree at a Massachusetts public college or university. The scholarships will be available to residents of the Commonwealth in need of financial assistance whose family income is less than the median family income in Massachusetts.

The Department of Higher Education shall establish guidelines governing said program, which shall include but not be limited to eligibility requirements, selection criteria (such as acceptable grades and an academic plan for timely degree completion), and other guidelines designed to help meet the department's goals, such as increasing overall student success and graduation rates, and lowering achievement gaps for high-risk students; provided, further, that no funds from this scholarship program may be used to pay the tuition or fees for any course or program offered or administered by a non-public entity and that no student shall be eligible to receive a scholarship from this program more than one time.

If funds appropriated for this program are insufficient to cover costs of qualified applicants, the department shall hold a lottery for available scholarships. The funds for the program are meant to supplement and not supplant existing scholarship funds; funds for this program shall not be derived from existing financial aid programs the Commonwealth administers.

The department shall provide the Joint Committee of Higher Education of the General Court a report analyzing the usage, achievements and costs of this program, together with recommendations for its future, no later than 120 days following the program's first year of operation.

*Status: Joint Committee on Higher Education*

**SB 712**

(Sen. Bruce Tarr)

**AN ACT RELATIVE TO THE FINISH LINE SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM**

Similar to S. 709 but includes different income eligibility guidelines: The scholarships will be available to residents of the Commonwealth in need of financial assistance whose family income is less than the 125% of the median family income in Massachusetts.

*Status: Joint Committee on Higher Education*



**Rhode Island General Assembly**

**HB 5175**

(Rep. Marvin L. Abney)

**AN ACT MAKING APPROPRIATIONS FOR SUPPORT OF THE STATE FOR THE FISCAL YEAR ENDING JUNE 30, 2018**

Article 3 - Relating to the Rhode Island Promise Scholarship (Gov. Raimondo's proposal for free tuition)

*Status: House Finance Committee*

**H 5143**

(Rep. Joseph McNamara, Rep. William O'Brien, Rep. Mia Ackerman, Rep. Patricia

Serpa, Rep. Gregg Amore)

**AN ACT RELATING TO EDUCATION – GET ON YOUR FEET LOAN FORGIVENESS PROGRAM**

Establishes the “The Get On Your Feet Loan Forgiveness Program” in Rhode Island to assist recent college and university graduates from certain schools in the repayment of their student loans. The program would provide for a period (the first 2 years after graduation and any applicable deferment period on the graduate's student loans) whereby the state would pay a graduate's student loans provided the individual meets certain requirements. Individuals would apply to the Rhode Island student loan authority to participate in the program. The act would also establish a state high needs council to make determinations that would allow some individuals working in a high needs area to continue in the program beyond the first two years. The act would be phased in over a four (4) year period commencing on July 1, 2018.

*Status: House Health Education and Welfare Committee*

**HB 5773**

(Rep. O'Grady, Rep. Marshall, Rep. Serpa, Rep. Kennedy, Rep. Casey)

**AN ACT RELATING TO EDUCATION – RHODE ISLAND PROMISE SCHOLARSHIP**

Establishes a postsecondary scholarship program to be named the Rhode Island Promise Scholarship, funded in part by the state and in partnership with public and private entities that engage in a memorandum of understanding that internships would be provided for students receiving the education or field of training. This would include vocational trade schools. Students would be required to enter into a memorandum of understanding that their internships are a requirement of free tuition. Municipalities, state agencies, higher education facilities, open and closed shop trades, non-profits as well as private industry would be able to enter into this proposed educational program for interns/apprentices. Funding for this program will be a mixture of state funds and fees paid into the program for intern hours by participating entities.

*Status – House Finance Committee*

**Vermont General Assembly**

**SB 104**

(Sen. Anthony Polina)

**AN ACT RELATING TO THE REDUCTION OF POSTSECONDARY TUITION FOR VERMONT STUDENTS FROM FAMILIES WITH LOW AND MODERATE INCOME**

The bill proposes to: (1) lower the cost of tuition for Vermont students from families with low and moderate income who attend the Vermont State Colleges by creating the Vermont Promise Scholarship Program; (2) double the bank franchise tax on financial institutions with deposits in excess of \$750,000,000.00 to provide funding for the Vermont Promise Scholarship Program; (3) require that the Vermont Student Assistance Corporation award grants and scholarships solely for use at the Vermont State Colleges, at the University of Vermont, or at educational institutions in states that have executed a reciprocity agreement with Vermont; and (4) direct the Vermont Student Assistance Corporation to use award grant funding that would have been used to pay tuition to out-of-state schools to fund the Vermont Promise Scholarship Program.

*Status – House Education Committee*