



The Cherish Act

MTA Legislative Agenda, 2023-2024

Lead Sponsors:

Rep. Sean Garballey (D-Arlington) | Rep. Pat Duffy (D-Holyoke) |
Sen. Jo Comerford (D-Northampton) | Sen. Robyn Kennedy (D-Worcester) |
Sen. Paul Mark (D-Becket) | Sen. Jake Oliveira (D-Ludlow)

Legislation to ensure a strong public higher education system

The Cherish Act establishes a blueprint for a world-class system of public higher education that is urgently needed to meet widely shared goals in the Commonwealth. If passed, it would enable people of all backgrounds in every community to build successful and fulfilling lives; address economic, social and racial equity gaps; meet our state’s climate change goals; create high-quality workplaces with fair wages and benefits to attract and retain faculty and staff; enable new discoveries and innovation; and invest in a competitive workforce that is the engine of the state’s economy.

This bill would:

- Create a program that would enable students to graduate from public higher education debt-free, beginning in FY24 with debt-free community college.
- Invest \$2,000 per high-need student in expanded student support services, expanding the proven SUCCESS program to all of public higher education.
- Ensure eligibility for state health care and retirement benefits for adjunct faculty and part-time staff.
- Establish a Commission on Wage Equity and Working Conditions to recommend changes aimed at eliminating inequities based on gender, race, job category and other conditions and ensure that Massachusetts is competitive with peer states.
- Institute fair and adequate minimum funding levels for public higher education that would be phased in over five years, and prohibit tuition and fee increases during this implementation as long as the state’s funding commitment is met.
- Create a commission to assess public college and university buildings relative to health, safety and energy efficiency, and to recommend a plan to bring all buildings into compliance with this standard by 2035.
- Require the state to assume the full cost of state salaries and fringe benefits, future capital construction and renovations to campus facilities, and to pay for campuses’ existing capital debt service obligations.

Passing the Cherish Act means:

Properly investing in the Commonwealth’s most important engine of democracy, opportunity and economic prosperity.

Enabling more people to benefit from public higher education by:

- Increasing scholarship aid to provide debt-free public college for students.
- Creating a debt-free community college program in FY24, and for four-year universities subsequently.
- Eliminating student fees related to capital debt, fringe benefit and payroll costs.

For more information please contact MTA Government Relations

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