

[MTA's Higher Education Legislative Priorities](#)

The Government Relations Committee recommends these bills, broken up into five categories, for the 2021-2022 legislative session. The recommendations are the result of a process that included extensive input from MTA members.

The Cherish Act

Senator Jo Comerford (D-Northampton) | Representative Sean Garballey (D-Arlington) | Representative Paul Mark (D-Peru)

- Implements the core finding of the 2014 Higher Education Finance Commission report by increasing funding to public higher education by the amount needed to return to fiscal 2001 per-student spending levels, adjusted for inflation, and establishes principles that ensure a just distribution of these funds.

[Fact Sheet](#) | [Senate Bill](#) | [House Bill](#)

An Act to provide fair working conditions for public higher education adjunct faculty

Lead Sponsors: Senator Pat Jehlen (D-Somerville) | Representative Paul Mark (D-Peru)

- Provides adjunct faculty with access to health insurance and state pension options.
- Requires per-course pay parity for adjunct faculty.
- Establishes a minimum 7.5 percent state contribution to the SMART Plan retirement account for faculty who work less than half time.
- Creates a fund and mechanism for increasing the number of tenure-track faculty on public college and university campuses and gives current adjunct faculty notice and priority consideration for new full-time positions.

[Fact Sheet](#) | [Senate Bill](#) | [House Bill](#)

An Act to ensure fair public higher education workplaces

Lead Sponsors: Senator Pat Jehlen (D-Somerville) | Representative Paul Mark (D-Peru)

- Creates a new tuition and fee credit program for public higher education employees, their spouses and their dependents. The credit covers 100 percent of the mandatory costs of undergraduate, graduate and certificate programs or courses at public colleges and universities.
- Streamlines the process through which public higher education collective bargaining agreements are validated and funded.

- Eliminates the 60-day Group Insurance Commission waiting period for newly hired state employees and municipal employees who receive health insurance coverage through the GIC.

[Fact Sheet](#) | [Senate Bill](#) | [House Bill](#)

An Act to ensure safe and healthy public higher education campuses

Lead Sponsors: Senator Adam Gomez (D-Springfield) | Representative Liz Miranda (D-Boston)

- Establishes new state ventilation requirements that current and future public higher education campus facilities must meet under both normal and pandemic conditions, mandates that campuses conduct assessments of ventilation systems to ensure compliance, and requires that the state, not the campuses, fund needed repairs and upgrades to ventilation systems.
- Requires the operation of COVID-19 testing programs for staff and students on public higher education campuses. The programs will be operated at no cost to the campuses and will be paid for by the state or with eligible federal funds.
- Ensures that staff and students on public higher education campuses have access to personal protective equipment. The PPE will be provided at no cost to the campuses and will be paid for by the state or with eligible federal funds.
- Directs the establishment of health and safety committees on every public higher ed campus and encourages institutions to prioritize health and safety, including pandemic planning.

[Fact Sheet](#) | [Senate Bill](#) | [House Bill](#)

An Act to guarantee debt-free public higher education

Lead Sponsors: Senator Jamie Eldridge (D-Acton) | Representative Natalie Higgins (D-Leominster)

- Establishes that it is state policy to guarantee free public higher education as a right for all students.
- Creates a grant program to pay the equivalent of tuition and mandatory fees to an eligible student at any Massachusetts public college or university or in a certificate, vocational, or training program at a public institution.
- For students who meet the income eligibility for federal Pell Grants, gives additional aid in grants to cover the additional costs of attendance, including but not limited to room and board, books and supplies, transportation, and personal expenses.
- Ensures that funds from this program do not affect eligibility for other state grants, gift aid, institutional aid, or federal aid, including Pell Grants through the FAFSA process

[Fact Sheet](#) | [Senate Bill](#) | [House Bill](#)