

# AN ACT TO GUARANTEE DEBT-FREE PUBLIC HIGHER EDUCATION S.D 426 & H.D 1148

Lead Sponsors: Sen. Jamie Eldridge & Rep. Natalie Higgins

## Why this matters?

State funding for public higher education in Massachusetts has been cut drastically in the past 20 years resulting in significant tuition & fee increases and **one of the fastest-growing student debt burdens in the nation.**

## Bill Highlights



Establish that it is the policy of Massachusetts to guarantee free public higher education as a right for **all** students.

Create a grant program to pay the equivalent of tuition and mandatory fees to an eligible student at any MA public college or university, or certificate, vocational, or training program at a public institution.

Ensure 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.

Students who meet the income eligibility for Federal Pell Grants will receive additional aid in grants to cover the costs of attendance, including but not limited to, **room & board, books & supplies, transportation, and personal expenses.**

## Passing this bill means:

- High-quality affordable public higher education is a **right not a privilege.**
- Greater socioeconomic diversity at public institutions.
- More people can complete their degrees without financial distress.
- Overall economy of the Commonwealth is improved when more people have access to affordable programs of higher education.

Please email [James.Eldridge@masenate.gov](mailto:James.Eldridge@masenate.gov) if you have any questions.