



An Act to Promote the Successful Transition of Students with Disabilities to Post-Secondary Education, Employment, and Independent Living - H.3720 (formerly H.159)

Lead Sponsors: Rep. Sannicandro, Sen. DiDomenico

- This bill will help to ensure that students with disabilities receive the essential special education transition planning and services necessary for further education, employment, and independent living mandated by federal law. The legislation requires the Board of Education to revise educator licensure regulations to provide a mechanism for current special education teachers and rehabilitation counselors to obtain an Endorsement in Transition Services.
- Special education transition services, which are required by federal law, are critical to facilitate a student's movement to post-school activities, including post-secondary education, vocational education, competitive employment; including supported employment, continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, and community participation.
- In Massachusetts, youth with disabilities:¹
 - ❖ Drop-out at a rate that is 50% higher than the drop-out rate of non-disabled youth. (*Drop out rate for students with disabilities is 5.0% compared to 2.5% for regular education students*).
 - ❖ Are less likely to receive a regular high school diploma. (*35% of students with disabilities failed to graduate, more than twice the rate of 14.5% for nondisabled students*)
 - ❖ Are three times more likely to live in poverty as adults.
 - ❖ Nationally, youth with disabilities are employed full or part time 35% compared with 78% for their non disabled peers. Unemployment rates for adults with disabilities have remained at 70% for the past 20 years.
- The President's Commission on Excellence in Special Education highlighted concern about unemployment rates for students with disabilities leaving school, and found: "One reason for these outcomes is that educators are inadequately prepared to provide the services required under IDEA"²
- The Governor's Commission on Mental Retardation, the Department of Mental Retardation (now known as the Department of Developmental Services), the ARC, and Families Organizing for Change conducted statewide regional focus groups regarding transition. Recommendations emphasized the need to employ transition specialists at local high schools to provide technical assistance to teachers, students and families to help them navigate the transition process³.
- Although schools rely heavily on special education teachers to implement and manage transition planning and services⁴, current state licensure requirements inadequately address this critical area leaving most teachers unprepared, through no fault of their own, for the challenges entailed in preparing students as they transition into adulthood.
- With transition specialists prepared to provide the services already required under federal law, this bill will help to ensure that existing dollars are spent in a more effective manner and will improve competitive employment and independent living outcomes for the approximately 58,000 students with disabilities ages 14-22 years old.

For further information, please contact Johanne Pino at Massachusetts Advocates for Children at 617-357-8431x234

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¹ Department of Elementary and Secondary Education; Harris Survey 2004 and DESE website at www.doe.edu

² President's Commission on Excellence in Special Education (2005)

³ See Governor's Commission on Mental Retardation summary report, *Transition from School to Adult Department of Mental Retardation* (July, 2007). (Now known as Department of Developmental Services DDS)

⁴ National Center on Secondary Education and Transition Information Brief Vol. 4, Issue 4 (August 2005)