



# The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

## House of Representatives

State House, Boston 02133-1054

**ADRIAN C. MADARO**

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**CHAIR**

JOINT COMMITTEE ON  
MENTAL HEALTH, SUBSTANCE USE  
AND RECOVERY

June 7, 2021

Senator Anne Gobi  
Chair, Joint Committee on Higher Education  
24 Beacon Street  
Room 413-A  
Boston, MA 02133

Representative David Rogers  
Chair, Joint Committee on Higher Education  
24 Beacon Street  
Room 43  
Boston, MA 02133

Dear Chairs Gobi and Rogers:

I write in support of H.1352, An Act to ensure tuition equity for Massachusetts residents. I filed this legislation with Leader Michael Moran to ensure that every Massachusetts resident has the opportunity to pursue higher education at in-state tuition rates regardless of their immigration status. This legislation would allow all students, except nonimmigrant individuals, to qualify for in-state tuition rates at our state public colleges and universities if they have attended a Massachusetts high school for at least three years and graduated or if they have obtained the equivalent through an adult basic education program. This bill does not make state financial aid available to undocumented students, and undocumented students are not eligible for federal financial aid. At a time when college enrollment is drastically down in the Commonwealth, this legislation would bring in additional revenue for our public higher education system through new student enrollment at virtually no cost. This legislation would also increase the number of educated residents in the Commonwealth and affirm our commitment towards the inclusivity of our immigrant neighbors, many of whom grew up in Massachusetts and do not have recollection of any other place to call home. Further, at a time when the public health emergency has highlighted the myriad ways in which socioeconomic inequities exacerbate illness among marginalized populations, it is incumbent upon us to increase access to higher education for immigrant communities that have been disproportionately burdened by the coronavirus pandemic. This sensible piece of legislation would create economic, fiscal and social benefits for the Commonwealth.

This proposal would bolster revenue for our public higher education system with nearly no new investment by increasing student enrollment. Currently, highly-motivated and brilliant undocumented students who are already studying in our Massachusetts K-12 education system rarely, if ever, matriculate in our public colleges and universities due to the prohibitive cost of out-of-state tuition, which is significantly higher than in-state tuition. As such, decreasing the cost of tuition for undocumented students in Massachusetts would result in new enrollments. A 2011 report by the Massachusetts Taxpayers Foundation estimated that 315 to 365 undocumented immigrants would enroll in public colleges and universities in the first year if Massachusetts were to adopt in-state tuition rates for graduating high school students.<sup>1</sup> The report also concluded that the number of new students could easily be absorbed by our public higher education system. Moreover, since 2011, our college enrollment numbers have been dramatically decreasing, according to recent data released by the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education.<sup>2</sup> The data further demonstrates that community colleges in the Commonwealth experienced a greater annual decline in enrollment than four-year public colleges and universities in 2020. In Texas, where undocumented students have had access to in-state tuition rates since 2001, a majority of undocumented students have enrolled in community colleges.<sup>3</sup> Assuming this trend would hold in Massachusetts, increasing access to higher education for undocumented students through in-state tuition rates would help stabilize and augment enrollment at community colleges and other public higher education programs. This rise in enrollment would enrich the student body of our public colleges at virtually no additional cost to the Commonwealth and is needed now more than ever.

The public health emergency of the last year has highlighted the ways in which different populations experience illness in varying degrees of severity based on social determinants of health. It is clear that a more educated populace is less likely to experience socioeconomic hardships due to increased earning potential and wealth, which is correlated with better health outcomes. We know there are higher high school graduation rates among undocumented students in states where they have access to in-state tuition rates than in states where they do not.<sup>4</sup> Increasing access to higher education through in-state tuition rates could not only increase the number of immigrant students who attend college, but the number of immigrant students who graduate from high school as well. At a time when the coronavirus pandemic has laid bare the structural inequities baked into our systems of governance, it is imperative that we take steps to remove barriers to opportunity for those in marginalized communities. During the pandemic,

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.masstaxpayers.org/sites/default/files/publications/2020-04/In-state%20tuition.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.mass.edu/datacenter/2020enrollmentestimates.asp>

<sup>3</sup>

<https://reportcenter.highered.texas.gov/reports/data/overview-eligibility-for-in-state-tuition-and-state-financial-programs/>

<sup>4</sup> Bozick & Miller, In-State College Tuition Policies for Undocumented Immigrants: Implications for High School Enrollment Among Non-citizen Mexican Youth (JSTOR)

localities with higher immigrant populations like my own neighborhood of East Boston, suffered higher COVID-19 positivity rates, greater income loss and increased economic challenges. These outcomes are in part a reflection of the needless limitations imposed on highly-motivated and hard-working students in immigrant communities who wish to further their education. As no individual is disconnected from a family or community of residents who also experience the impact of their diminished opportunities, restricting the ability of undocumented students to pursue higher education makes their broader communities fall behind, resulting in additional expenses to the Commonwealth down the line. Providing more students in immigrant communities with greater access to higher education would help create a more resilient Commonwealth and achieve a more equitable recovery from the public health emergency.

Lastly, as the State Representative for East Boston, a diverse immigrant community that has welcomed every wave of immigration this country has ever seen, this is a piece of legislation with personal weight and importance to me. Every year, my office receives calls from passionate undocumented students and their families who are desperate for a chance to pursue higher education but cannot afford the cost of out-of-state tuition. These are students who typically immigrated after 2012 (missing out on eligibility for Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals), have spent some of their most formative years in the United States and consider Massachusetts their home. Their calls are some of the hardest calls we receive as there are almost never any easy answers to their questions. No private scholarship is ever enough to cover the full cost of attending our colleges and universities. Yet they are eager to learn and dream of a better future for themselves, their families, our neighborhoods, and our Commonwealth.

I believe it is time for Massachusetts to join the seventeen other states across the country offering in-state tuition rates for undocumented students.<sup>5</sup> I strongly urge you to report this bill favorably from this Committee. Please do not hesitate to reach out to me should you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Adrian C. Madaro', with a stylized flourish at the end.

**Adrian C. Madaro**  
Representative  
First Suffolk District

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.ncsl.org/research/immigration/tuition-benefits-for-immigrants.aspx>