

# **Councilor Gomes calls for reversal of planned closing of downtown New Bedford police station**

The following written motion is expected to be presented to the New Bedford City Council meeting scheduled for Thursday, June 24, 2021:

WRITTEN MOTION, Councillor Gomes, requesting, increased Police patrols in the Downtown historical area due to the increasing foot traffic and criminal activity around Custom House Square and the Massachusetts 54th Volunteer Regiment Memorial, throughout the historical district business owners are concerned that this criminal activity could be detrimental not only to their businesses but to the district as a whole; and further, once more requesting, that the Mayor reverse his decision to close to Downtown Police station, the closing of the station will have a dramatic and detrimental effect on the entire downtown area. (To be Referred to the Mayor, Police Chief Paul Oliveira, and the Committee on Public Safety and Neighborhoods and that Rule 40 be Waived.)

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## **Riley Pledges Enforcement of New Vocational School**

# Admissions Rules

By Katie Lannan

State House News Service

Regulations adopted Tuesday and set to affect applicants for the 2022-2023 school year will require vocational-technical schools to develop their own admissions policies “that promote equitable access”, removing the requirement that grades, attendance, discipline records and counselor recommendations be used as admissions criteria.

Elementary and Secondary Education Commissioner Jeff Riley said the new regulations will bring Massachusetts more in line with other states, give state officials authority to intervene in cases of non-compliance and update a process that “has not been touched” for 20 years.

“Last year, we gave the vocational schools an opportunity to make changes, and we didn’t feel that they had done a substantial enough job in doing that, and so today we’re asking for the ability to intervene, if necessary, to make sure that children get a fair opportunity,” Riley said before the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education voted to approve the new regulations.

He said his department plans “to be very forceful” in cases of non-compliance and could in those cases “order changes to admission policies that may include requiring a lottery.”

A February analysis of waitlist data shows that demand for vocational education across Massachusetts exceeds available seats, with 1.75 completed student applications for every program seat. In some communities, according to the analysis, the number of applications rose to twice as high as available seats.

That review also identified disparities in the number of

admissions offers made for different student subgroups, finding that, “Students of color, students identified as economically-disadvantaged, students with disabilities, English Learners, and students [whose] first language is not English received fewer offers of admission.”

A group called the Vocational Education Justice Coalition had urged the state to move toward a lottery-based admissions system, and ahead of the vote called out what coalition members described as shortcomings around access and equity in the new approach.

Lunenburg Sen. John Cronin also asked for changes, using the public comment period at Tuesday’s meeting to flag three questions he wanted answered: what admissions outcomes need to be fixed, which are equitable and fair, and which necessitate an admissions lottery.

“I fear that those answers to those questions vary district to district, board member to board member, commissioner to commissioner, school administrator to school administrator,” he said. “Until we have clear regulations and standards that provide clear answers to those questions, we’re just punting on the hardest questions that surround this issue.”

No board members voted against the regulations. Parent representative Mary Ann Stewart voted “present.”

“I am also very glad to see the collaborative effort of the coalition with the commissioner and the department working together to bring up a good policy. I don’t think we’re there yet, personally,” Stewart said.

Other speakers who addressed the board during its public comment period included parents raising concerns about mask-wearing in schools.

Speakers raised issues including mixed messages students might receive if unmasked adults are requiring them to wear masks

and an uneven landscape across schools if individual districts are able to choose whether to mandate masks.

At several points in the meeting, Board Chair Katherine Craven asked audience members to remain quiet so the board could proceed, including in one instance where the crowd booed after an update on Riley's performance evaluation. Some in the crowd continued calling out comments – though not all were fully audible over the livestream, one person said that masks were oppressing children and one asked board members how they sleep at night.

After Riley introduced the vocational school regulations, a chant of “let her speak” arose from the audience and the board broke for a recess. After the meeting resumed, it was punctuated with sounds of people banging on the windows outdoors.

“We understand that there are some people upset about the mask-wearing that had to take place,” Riley said. “I’m not sure with the masks coming off and not being required why they continue to bang.”

Over the weekend, Riley distributed guidance clarifying that education officials will [recommend](https://statehousenews.com/brief/2021910), but not require, that students and staff wear masks during summer school programs. All health and safety recommendations, including mask requirements and social distancing, are set to be lifted for the 2021-2022 school year.

Asked Tuesday about the department's stance on summer masking, Massachusetts Teachers Association President Merrie Najimy said her union believes there is no one-size-fits-all solution, since kids under 12 are not yet eligible for COVID-19 vaccines and vaccination and infection rates vary by community.

“Every local community should be making the decision about who

should and shouldn't be masked based on their circumstances," she told the News Service.

[Chris Van Buskirk contributed reporting]

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# **Baker Backs Biden Push for Death Sentence in Boston Marathon Bombing**

Chris Lisinski

State House News Service

With the Biden administration reportedly seeking to reinstate the death penalty for Boston Marathon bomber Dzhokhar Tsarnaev, Gov. Charlie Baker on Tuesday voiced his support for the push.

"I said a long time ago that I thought Tsarnaev should face the death penalty, so I would agree with the Biden administration on that one," Baker told reporters when asked to weigh in at a State House press conference. According to multiple reports, the Department of Justice filed a brief with the U.S. Supreme Court arguing that the court should respect a jury's decision to sentence Tsarnaev to death.

Tsarnaev helped place two bombs along the Boston Marathon route in 2013 with his deceased brother Tamerlan, killing three and injuring hundreds more. The brothers killed an MIT police officer days later. In 2015, a U.S. District Court jury found Dzhokhar Tsarnaev guilty on all 30 counts brought against him and sentenced him to die by lethal injection, but a federal appeals court overturned the death penalty sentence

last year. Biden's administration is now pushing to reinstate capital punishment for Tsarnaev despite the Democrat himself saying he opposes the death penalty. Baker, a Republican, said in 2015 that he supports the death penalty – which was outlawed at the state level by the Supreme Judicial Court three decades ago – in the Tsarnaev case. He has also backed capital punishment for those who kill police officers.

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# Racial Equity Panel Uses First Hearing to Build To-Do List

By Chris Lisinski  
State House News Service

A diverse stream of lawmakers, activists and community leaders produced a lengthy list of racial equity proposals on Monday, kicking off one of the Legislature's most daunting undertakings to date: confronting centuries of structural racism ingrained in nearly every facet of public life.

Created by the Legislature in January, the Committee on Racial Equity, Civil Rights, and Inclusion convened its first hearing as it charts a course for this session. Speakers outlined priorities they hope to see lawmakers address – from enforcing a 2018 criminal justice reform law to making driver's licenses available to undocumented immigrants, from disaggregating data collection to offering reparations for slavery – in steps toward achieving the equality long promised but often not delivered for communities of color.

Legislative leaders created the panel in the wake of last

year's nationwide racial justice protests and police reform legislation, but the committee's mission will be far broader. Sen. Sonia Chang-Diaz, one of the group's co-chairs, said the panel is well aware that "structural racism and exclusion are marbled throughout the different institutions and existing policies of our commonwealth."

"Last year, the Legislature was laser-focused on reforming public safety, but our work to end structural racism is not confined to the public safety system and it is not done in our commonwealth," she said. "While we may not be able to do it all and end structural racism this legislative session, we need to begin working on pressing priorities so that we can do that piece-by-piece work."

The COVID-19 pandemic's influence was also apparent in the testimony. Black and Latino communities have been hit disproportionately hard during the health crisis, often facing higher rates of infection, challenges accessing vaccines, and greater economic harm than white communities.

Warning that "mass incarceration is perhaps the most pointed example of structural racism in our society," Prisoners' Legal Services Executive Director Elizabeth Matos urged lawmakers to install an ombudsman to oversee public health standards in correctional facilities and require the state Department of Correction to review inmate populations for potential release as a precaution against spread of the highly infectious virus.

"We do not want to see another drastic spike in cases and deaths like we did last fall," Matos said. "Oversight is critical to avoid a continued failure to be appropriately vigilant in these congregate settings."

Rep. Brandy Fluker Oakley, a Mattapan Democrat, also cited mass incarceration as a pressing issue she hopes to see lawmakers address alongside disproportionate eviction rates, maternal mortality rates and gaps in wages.

About 10 percent of the state's population is Latino, but 24 percent of those imprisoned in Massachusetts are Latino, Fluker Oakley said. Similarly, Black residents represent 7 percent of the statewide population and 26 percent of the incarcerated population.

The pandemic brought a wave of increased discrimination and violence aimed at Asian American and Pacific Islander residents. From March 19, 2020 to Feb. 28, 2021, the Stop AAPI Hate reporting center tracked nearly 3,800 instances of hate directed at Asian Americans in the United States.

Rep. Tackey Chan, a member of the House Asian Caucus, told his colleagues that Asian-Americans "face racism in a very different way" than other ethnicities, including through the "model minority myth," and are often reduced to "invisibility."

In 1871, Chan recounted, a mob killed 19 Chinese immigrants in Los Angeles. Filipino-Americans who fought for the United States in World War II, he said, did not receive any veterans benefits until 2009.

"When I start talking about how systemic racism affects us and how we have been largely maligned in U.S. history and in politics – not just in the last four years, but try 200-plus years – people are quite shocked," he said.

Chan said the House Asian Caucus wants to see action to achieve better representation on state commissions and boards and to update how the state collects demographic data, a point also raised by fellow Caucus member Rep. Maria Robinson and by Massachusetts Asian American Commission Chair Sam Hyun.

While the panel embarked on its work to chart a path toward achieving racial equity, Suffolk County's top prosecutor told lawmakers they should also turn their attention three years into the past.



Suffolk County District Attorney Rachael Rollins told the committee that her office continues to struggle with a “staggering lack of standardized and transparent data” about the criminal justice system, even in the wake of a 2018 law that featured numerous data reporting requirements.

Rollins said her team still receives paper copies of documents even though partner agencies are storing the information electronically, making it difficult to track changes in crime and recidivism rates that could stem from policy changes.

Much of the data county prosecutors can access, Rollins said, is stored in boxes in a warehouse, requiring assistant district attorneys and administrative staff to spend tens of thousands of hours per year – which the DA estimated as the equivalent of four to nine full-time staff positions – solely on transcription.

The Legislature must step in and enforce the data collection and sharing requirements in the 2018 law to help address inequities, Rollins said.

“The answers we need, the answers this committee needs, are out there. They exist,” Rollins said, later telling lawmakers, “We need buy-in, and we need you guys to exert the power you definitely have.”

Asked why other agencies have yet to adhere to the law, Rollins replied that the state’s criminal justice system is still working under an “incredibly old, archaic data storage system.”

“It is a system that would require significant amounts of money to update, but I think it’s just excuses, quite frankly,” Rollins said. “I will leave those agencies to explain themselves to you, but I encourage you to call them before you and ask them why.”

Boston Mayor Kim Janey highlighted several issues she wants

state lawmakers to tackle to achieve racial equity, aiming in particular at a vast imbalance in how public dollars are spent.

Janey pointed to a report finding that just 1.2 percent of the \$2.1 billion the city spent on construction and professional goods and services between 2014 and 2019 went to Black- or Latino-owned businesses.

“The state could be helpful in this,” Janey said, referencing legislation re-filed this session (H 3167) that would impose additional requirements for engaging minority- and women-owned firms in state procurements. “Moving forward on that front could be extremely helpful to the work that we are already doing.”

Several speakers voiced support for bills that would allow undocumented immigrants to acquire driver’s licenses or limit law enforcement interactions with federal immigration authorities, proposals that Democratic legislative leaders have been hesitant to embrace even amid broad support within their own caucuses.

Many of the racial equity priorities lawmakers and advocates cited at Monday’s hearing intersect with some of the largest issues facing the state, such as a housing market with limited stock and rapidly rising prices.

When House Speaker Ronald Mariano and Senate President Karen Spilka announced the creation of the Racial Equity Committee, they said they would ask the panel to study the impacts of other proposed bills.

“Systemic racism has manifested throughout our history, and it is ingrained in our own laws and institutions,” Fluker Oakley said Monday, voicing her support for that mission. “To dismantle this pervasive problem, we need to evaluate each piece of legislation that is being seriously considered by the Legislature to ensure that it will not perpetuate racial

disparities and actively counteract disparities and inequities that already exist.”

Monday's hearing came as Massachusetts prepares to recognize Juneteenth, which commemorates the June 19, 1865 date on which the final slaves in Texas learned of their freedom, for the first time as an official state holiday.

Black and Latino Legislative Caucus Rep. Chynah Tyler announced Monday that lawmakers will host a commemorative flag-raising on Wednesday, which she plans to livestream on Facebook.

# Massachusetts Public University Medication Abortion Bill Stirs Debate

By Chris Van Buskirk  
State House News Service

Public universities in Massachusetts would be required to provide medication abortion options to students and offer referrals for abortion care services not provided in their health centers under legislation advocates said would help promote equity and increase the number of students who graduate.

The bill (H 2399 / S 1470), filed by Rep. Lindsay Sabadosa and Sen. Jason Lewis, would establish a fund administered by the Department of Public Health and Department of Higher Education to help cover the costs of the medication abortion options like abortion pills.

The Department of Public Health would use the fund to provide grants of no less than \$200,000 to each public university health center to pay for the cost, "both direct and indirect, of medical abortion readiness," according to the bill.

The legislation would also require DPH to submit a yearly report detailing the number of colleges or universities that operate health centers and the number of medical abortions provided at those centers, among other things.

Smith College Women and Gender Professor Carrie Baker is researching the burden students face as a result of having to travel off-campus for medication abortion services. According to Baker's research, between 40 and 64 public university students in the state obtain medication abortions each month which equals out to about 480 to 768 each year.

She also identified the nearest abortion clinic to each of the 13 public university campuses and then calculated the distance and travel times by public transportation. Baker said she found that students often travel between two and 42 miles to obtain medication abortion services, a process that she said can take hours out of a day.

"People who give birth while in college are less likely to graduate than those who do not and 89 percent of students say that having a child while in school would make it harder to achieve their goals," she said, referring to her research. "Abortion using medication is a safe, effective non-surgical method of ending a pregnancy in the first 10 weeks that could easily be provided in university health centers, but it's currently not available there."

Debby Dugan, a member of the Republican State Committee, spoke in opposition to the legislation, calling abortion a "promised escape" that "enslaves the mothers, the fathers, and anyone who's involved in the process."

"It enslaves them to a lifetime of shame and guilt," said

Dugan, who noted that she has previously served at crisis pregnancy centers and taught abstinence to middle schoolers. "I beseech you not to do this. As a Christian woman, I believe each and every one of us will be held accountable for our actions. And you ladies and gentlemen, also will be held accountable for your actions today."

Dr. Mark Rollo, a family physician from Fitchburg, cited risks medication abortion options pose to people who use them while speaking in opposition to the bill.

"I want you to imagine a daughter of yours being sent off to college, only to learn that the school is an adjunct to places like Planned Parenthood," he said during the hearing. "I am sickened by the thought of a young woman hemorrhaging while she sits on the toilet in a college dormitory or looking into the toilet to see a fully formed fetus about to be flushed."

Sen. Becca Rausch, a cosponsor of the legislation, fired back at Rollo and Dugan for what she said were "numerous patently false statements" and "medically inaccurate language."

"Medication abortion is very safe. It has a safety record of over 99 percent, which is safer than over-the-counter painkillers," the Needham Democrat said. Rausch also pushed back on crisis pregnancy centers, calling them "fake women's health centers."

"By and large, fake women's health centers are anti-choice hotspots that disguise themselves as reproductive health care providers to trick people seeking abortion into entering their facilities, only to then actively discourage individuals seeking medical care from getting the care they both want and deserve," she said.

Max Montana, a Boston College junior who serves as co-president of the BC Pro-Life Club, said he wanted to speak against the bill to make sure "campuses do not become unsafe places for pregnant women."

“Public universities are not hospitals and their health and general staff are not equipped to handle this extreme change,” he said. “...Assuming this program will facilitate well over 20 medical abortions on these college campuses, this will mean universities and their personnel will have to find solutions to time sensitive, dangerous and, according to the FDA, sometimes deadly situations.”

Rausch again jumped into the conversation to push back against Montana and several of his colleagues from Boston College who spoke after him.

“In addition to those young men who testified from BC, I feel compelled to inform you that the bill before us has absolutely nothing to do with your school, which is a private school. This is a bill about public universities,” she said. “And to that same extent, related extent, colleges are already health clinics. In fact, that’s kind of the point that we’re talking about.”

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## **Galvin Views Redistricting Bill As Way to Protect Incumbents**

Chris Lisinski  
State House News Service

An intra-party fight between legislative Democrats and the state’s chief elections officer continued to deepen Friday, with Secretary of State William Galvin accusing lawmakers of trying to change how the state draws political maps to shield themselves from challenges and consolidate power.

A day after House Democrats pushed through a bill empowering the Legislature to carve up state and federal electoral districts before municipalities draw precincts, Galvin said he believes lawmakers are “making districts that are as favorable to themselves as they can.”

“Most of the people in the Legislature are not terribly concerned about general election contests, especially if they come from urban districts. Most any objective analysis would confirm that’s true,” Galvin told the News Service. “So then it becomes the primary.”

The legislation (H 3863) flips the standard order of operations for the decennial redistricting and reprecincting process, empowering the Legislature to create House, Senate, Governor’s Council and congressional districts first using Census tract and block data and requiring municipalities to craft their local precincts afterward. Galvin said he believes the push aims specifically at House districts rather than larger Senate or congressional districts. Asked how House leadership and representatives would benefit from the process change as he alleges, Galvin took aim specifically at Rep. Michael Moran, the House’s Redistricting Committee co-chair.

“Have you ever looked at Moran’s district?” Galvin said, referencing the shape of Moran’s 18th Suffolk District, which stretches like a tilted letter C following Boston neighborhoods along the Charles River and includes a single Brookline precinct. “It’s been that way for 40 years. It was created to get rid of me,” said Galvin, a Brighton Democrat who spent a decade and a half in the House before running unsuccessfully for treasurer and then winning secretary of state in 1994. “Obviously, it didn’t work.”

Moran could not be reached for immediate comment Friday afternoon, but he told the Boston Globe that Galvin’s criticisms of lawmakers are “not based in any fact whatsoever.” Earlier in the week, he told the News Service his

motivation was to “correct for a lot of things that have been baked into the system for decades.”

“There are people who are marginalized because of precincts built many years ago and where we can correct that I have every intention of doing that this time around,” Moran said. The bill has drawn support from several voting rights groups that say the majority of states approach redistricting in this fashion, enabling lawmakers to draw more cohesive districts using Census tracts and more easily keep communities of interest together. The legislation is opposed by the Massachusetts Municipal Association, and is now pending in the Senate. It’s unclear when that branch plans to take it up.

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## **Shrinking                      Massachusetts Republican Party Struggles For Direction**

The state Republican Party on Wednesday night united behind resolutions supporting Israel and opposing universal mail-in voting in Massachusetts, but the gathering did not seem to calm the tensions that have been boiling between conservatives and party members more loyal to Gov. Charlie Baker.

The MassGOP’s governing body assembled behind closed doors Wednesday night in Marlborough amidst a still-burning controversy over anti-gay comments made by Republican state committeewoman Deborah Martell.

Baker and nearly every elected Republican in the Legislature has called for Martell to step down from the state committee, but MassGOP Chairman Jim Lyons has refused to demand her



resignation, defending her right to free speech.

Martell was allowed to address the committee at the start of the meeting, which came as a surprise to some in attendance, and said she would not resign over her email to committee members in which she said she was “sickened” that 2nd Congressional District candidate Jeffrey Sossa-Paquette had adopted children with his husband.

Tom Mountain, the vice chair of the party, said he is no longer on speaking terms with Lyons, calling the controversy over Martell “the final straw.” Mountain said the meeting featured “a lot of shouting” and he said Lyons also used the occasion to defend himself against critics.

“At this stage, I’m just completely fed up. I’m tired of him moving the party in this direction to the point that we’re now crazy and saluting members who make bigoted remarks about a gay candidate because he adopted children,” Mountain said in an interview Thursday morning.

The party did adopt a resolution declaring racism and bigotry “completely inconsistent with the Republican Party’s platform,” but it did not include the penalties proposed by Norfolk Rep. Shawn Dooley in the original version that would have withheld the party’s support for any candidate that makes offensive remarks.

“It’s not a happy picture in the MassGOP. We’re losing a lot of donors. We’ve lost a lot of support and we’re now are in the middle of a public relations disaster. It’s a very contentious time. It really is,” Mountain said.

Lyons aimed to paint a more unified portrait of the MassGOP coming out of a meeting in which the state committee adopted a number of resolutions, including one expressing support for Israel’s right to defend itself, one supporting a requirement of “proof of citizenship through voter identification” in order to vote, and a third opposing the permanent adoption of

mail-in voting.

The House could vote at the State House as soon as Thursday on a plan that would make mail-in voting a permanent option for Massachusetts voters in biennial state elections after using the process during the COVID-19 pandemic to limit people's exposure to the virus at the polls.

Asserting that thousands of mail-in ballot applications were sent to incorrect addresses last cycle, the committee voted to "oppose all efforts" to make mail-in voting permanent.

"Republicans are free to disagree on plenty of things and have plenty of different opinions, but our collective resolve to stand in solidarity behind important issues like election integrity and supporting our nation's most loyal allies is unmatched," Lyons said in a statement.

The governor has also butted heads with party leadership over a plan hatched by more conservative members of the party to weaken the governor's position on the executive committee, which currently has the authority to endorse in Republican primaries.

Though proponents backed off a plan to remove Baker and other elected Republican officeholders from the committee, they did vote in support of stripping the executive committee of its power to endorse in Republican primaries.

Under the new plan, which must be redrafted and approved at the state committee's September meeting, a two-thirds vote of the full 80-member state committee would be required to endorse in a primary.

"How it is done. This resolution, passed unanimously, holds the meat of the Lyons reform. Doesn't fit the narrative of a deeply divided state committee," Wendy Wakeman, a Republican strategist and Lyons ally, wrote on Twitter.

Lyons, in a statement after the meeting, said the outcomes of the resolutions “put on notice” anyone who wants to continue to sow division within the party.

“There are those that spend so much time trying to sow chaos within the Massachusetts Republican Party, as shown by recent media coverage, but I’m proud tonight to say that Massachusetts Republicans State Committee members found common ground on several positions that matter most,” Lyons added.

Former Rep. Geoff Diehl, who is considering running for governor in 2022, said he did not think the party was as fractured as critics suggest. The state committee member said “everything that was accomplished was done by voice vote and only one or two items weren’t unanimous.”

“I thought Chairman Lyons was able to accomplish a great deal in the span of the 3 hr 15 min meeting!,” Diehl texted.

The committee, which did not permit media coverage of its Wednesday evening meeting in Marlborough, did not vote on Diehl’s proposal to lower the threshold at the MassGOP convention next year to qualify for the ballot from 15 percent to 10 percent of delegates. Diehl said he withdrew it to “keep the option open,” but felt he accomplished what he wanted, which was to encourage participation and dispel the notion that MassGOP leadership might actually try to increase the threshold to make it more difficult for Gov. Baker.

“Having put forth the motion seemed to alleviate that concern, in the end, with no need to make any changes,” Diehl said.

The state committee also adopted a resolution opposing further mask-wearing mandates, stating that masks should be voluntary for vaccinated and unvaccinated residents and that the Legislature should pass “checks and balances as well as clearly defined parameters” on a governor’s authority to impose mask mandates or other restrictions during an emergency.

The meeting took place at the Apex Entertainment Center in Marlborough in a room that party officials said had a capacity limit of 100, which led to some interested Republicans and the media being denied access. Mountain said that he sought to allow more people to enter the room, which had space for additional attendees, but was refused.

Of the 4.73 million total registered voters in February 2021, there were nearly 460,000 registered Republican voters in Massachusetts, according to state data, down from the party's highwater mark this century of more than 546,000 in October of 2000. There were 1.49 million registered Democratic voters in February across Massachusetts, and 2.72 million voters registered unenrolled.

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# **Massachusetts Income Tax Change Appears Headed Toward 2022 Ballot**

Michael P. Norton  
State House News Service

Massachusetts lawmakers are poised Wednesday to advance one of the most significant changes in state tax policy in years. Legislators will meet for a 1 p.m. Constitutional Convention, and Democrats who hold super-majorities in both chambers are set to vote to place on the 2022 ballot a constitutional amendment imposing a 4 percent surtax on household income above \$1 million per year. If adopted by voters, the change would take effect in 2023 and mark an historic departure from the state's flat income tax rate structure.

Citizens for Limited Taxation on Tuesday called the proposal “another attempt to crack the flat tax which will provide the first step toward creating a graduated income tax for all.” The group pointed back to the Legislature’s adoption and quick repeal of a tax on technology services in 2013, and warned that any effort to reverse an income surtax would take years.

Supporters of the surtax say it’s an appropriate way to ensure the state’s wealthiest households pay their “fair share” of the state’s collective tax burden, and will produce significant revenues to be invested in education and transportation.

The amendment was forwarded from the previous Legislature and is not subject to further amendment on Wednesday, which means the vote to send it to the ballot, where a bruising campaign is likely, is set to follow arguments for and against it. The measure also contains a cost of living adjustment clause “to ensure that this additional tax continues to apply only to the commonwealth’s highest-income taxpayers.”

The question before the convention will be on agreeing to the amendment (S 5) and 101 votes are required to advance it.

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## **Immigrant Tuition Bills Catching On, But Not in Massachusetts**

Nearly 20 years after one advocacy group started its push to make in-state public college tuition rates accessible to undocumented immigrants and 15 years after the House rejected similar legislation, supporters are hopeful that Massachusetts

will catch up to other states that have such policies on the books.

Legislation before the Higher Education Committee would extend in-state tuition rates – which are thousands of dollars per year lower than out-of-state rates – to undocumented immigrants who already reside in Massachusetts and attend its high schools, a change that backers say would help students secure a more stable financial footing and mitigate declining enrollment.

The latest push has the backing of one of the state higher education system's most prominent figures: UMass Boston Chancellor Marcelo Suarez-Orozco, who emigrated from Argentina as a teenager and whose academic work has focused on migration and education.

Suarez-Orozco warned lawmakers that requiring undocumented Massachusetts residents, many of whom were brought to the United States at a young age, to pay out-of-state tuition rates “imposes a tremendous undertow to students who are already often disadvantaged in a number of ways.”

“They’re often, though not always, the first generation to go to college. They usually come from low-income families and hold multiple family responsibilities. They are not eligible for any kind of federal financial aid, and there are very limited scholarship opportunities available for them,” Suarez-Orozco said.

“These students come up through our educational system and have worked hard to move on to college,” he later added. “They value education and often offer an untold potential to our commonwealth. An act that affords them the same financial relief and the opportunity for tuition equity with their peers will go a long way to eliminating some of the negative consequences our unauthorized immigrant youth students face day in and day out.”

At UMass Boston, tuition and mandatory fees for the 2021-2022 school year total \$14,697 for in-state students and \$35,159 for out-of-state students. Fitchburg State University will charge an annual tuition of \$970 for in-state students and \$7,050 for out-of-state students next year, roughly similar to out-of-state rates at the other state universities and community colleges.

The bills before the committee (S 823, H 1352) continue to draw criticism from undocumented immigration opponents who contended Tuesday that the change would incentivize and reward the practice. Republican Rep. Marc Lombardo has a bill (H 1348) before the panel that would prohibit an undocumented resident from accessing in-state tuition.

Henry Barbaro, a Newton resident, testified Tuesday in opposition to the proposals, telling lawmakers that the bills “encourage further illegal immigration” and are “unfair” to those who have migrated legally.

“Why would anyone go through the bother of legally immigrating to Massachusetts when they can sidestep the process and gain the same benefits?” Barbaro said.

Under the latest legislation filed by Democrats Rep. Michael Moran of Brighton and Sen. Sonia Chang-Diaz of Jamaica Plain, an undocumented resident must have attended a Massachusetts high school for at least three years and graduated or achieved similar results in a Bay State adult education program to qualify for in-state tuition.

In 2018, Massachusetts was home to about 13,000 undocumented children under the age of 17 who were enrolled in public K-12 schools, according to Amy Grunder, director of legislative affairs for the Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition.

“We know or should know that these young people are fully integrated into our commonwealth and they’re not going

anywhere,” Grunder said. “We do not benefit from excluding talented, motivated young people from higher education.”

Grunder told lawmakers that, since MIRA began advocating in 2003 for an earlier version of the legislation, 21 states and Washington, D.C. have extended in-state tuition eligibility to graduates of their high schools regardless of immigration status. That list includes neighboring Connecticut, Rhode Island and New York.

“These states are not outliers,” Grunder said. “They are pragmatic and they are fair, and it’s past time that we join them.”

Several participants at the committee’s Tuesday hearing, including Grunder and Rep. Carmine Gentile, noted that enrollment at state colleges and universities has been declining for years. Offering in-state tuition rates to undocumented immigrants, they said, could help mitigate that trend by attracting more students for whom higher education is currently too expensive.

None of the filers of the three major immigrant tuition bills – Moran, the House’s assistant majority leader; Chang-Diaz, who has been floated as a possible gubernatorial candidate; and Lombardo, the Republican who proposed legislation banning in-state tuition for undocumented immigrants – testified at Tuesday’s hearing.

While Democrats in Massachusetts have been outspoken on national immigration issues, Beacon Hill legislative leaders have often steered clear of bills favored by immigration reform activists.

The Legislature approved language as part of its 2004 budget that would have provided in-state tuition rates to undocumented immigrants, but Republican Gov. Mitt Romney vetoed that section and lawmakers opted not to override it.



A year and a half later, the House brought a bill to the floor that would have opened in-state tuition to undocumented students who attended a Massachusetts high school for at least three years, graduated and submit proof they have filed for U.S. citizenship. Representatives rejected the bill 57-97.

Presented with vocal support and opposition, lawmakers have opted more recently not to advance bills allowing undocumented immigrants to secure driver's licenses or limiting law enforcement interaction with federal immigration authorities.

Supporters of those proposals expressed hope earlier this year that the first session under Speaker Ronald Mariano could produce results, though so far none of the bills have advanced beyond the committee stage.

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## **Warren Delivers Remarks at Freedom From Facebook and Google: Break Up Big Tech**

Today, United States Senator Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.) delivered remarks at Freedom From Facebook and Google's virtual event calling to break up Big Tech.

The full text of her remarks is available below.

Remarks by Senator Elizabeth Warren

May 27, 2021

"Hello! Thank you for inviting me to join you today! I'm sorry we couldn't do this in person, but I'm grateful for this chance to pass along this message. I want to start with a big thank you to the Freedom from Facebook and Google coalition

for bringing us together today. You all do powerfully important work to drive bold, progressive change forward. And I am grateful down to my toes for all that you do.

I also want to give a special shout-out to my colleague, Congressman Mondaire Jones. Go Mondaire! Congressman Jones is off to a running start in Congress and I'm thrilled that he's here with us today.

Thirty years ago, Facebook, Google, and Amazon did not exist. Now they are among the most valuable and best-known companies in the entire world. Now it's a great story – but it is also a story about the dangers of monopolies and anti-competitive actions.

Today's Big Tech companies have grown so giant and so powerful that they threaten our economy, our society, and our very democracy. They have bulldozed competition, used private information for profit, and tilted the playing field against everyone else. In the process, they have stifled small businesses and innovation. And they have threatened our democratic processes.

We must hold these Big Tech companies accountable and break them up, so that there's real competition – and so that our democracy is not held hostage to their desire to make more and more money. We need to make sure that the next generation of great American tech companies has a chance to grow and flourish.

And to do that, we need government regulations that make sure that everybody – even the biggest and most powerful companies in America – that everybody plays by the rules. We need to stop this generation of Big Tech companies from throwing around their political power to shape the rules in their favor. We need to stop them from throwing around their economic power to buy up every potential competitor.

Just this past year, the FTC and 48 states recognized what

I've been arguing for a long time: companies like Facebook snuff out competition. That's exactly what they did when they bought Instagram and WhatsApp. And this case demanding that Facebook unwind those purchases is a huge first step in the fight to break up Big Tech.

As Big Tech companies like Facebook and Google face growing scrutiny, we have a huge opportunity in Congress to make big, structural change and to finally hold these powerful companies accountable.

We do that by enshrining strong antitrust principles into new legislation, we do that by reviving serious antitrust enforcement at both the FTC and the DOJ, and we do that by fighting monopolies in any industry that threaten our economy, our society, and our democracy.

If we all make our voices heard, we can take power away from the wealthy and well-connected in Washington and we can put it back where it belongs – in the hands of the people.

So to all of you here, I'm grateful for all that you do – and grateful for all that you will do. Keep up the great work. It's an honor to fight alongside you."