

Chapter 284 of the Acts of 2014

An Act Relative to the Reduction of Gun Violence

(“Safe and Supportive Schools” Provisions)

SECTION 6. Chapter 69 of the General Laws is hereby amended by inserting after section 10 the following section:-

Section 1P. (a) As used in this section the term “safe and supportive schools” shall mean schools that foster a safe, positive, healthy and inclusive whole-school learning environment that: (i) enables students to develop positive relationships with adults and peers, regulate their emotions and behavior, achieve academic and non-academic success in school and maintain physical and psychological health and well-being; and (ii) integrates services and aligns initiatives that promote students’ behavioral health, including social and emotional learning, bullying prevention, trauma sensitivity, dropout prevention, truancy reduction, children’s mental health, foster care and homeless youth education, inclusion of students with disabilities, positive behavioral approaches that reduce suspensions and expulsions and other similar initiatives.

(b) Consistent with the framework recommended by the behavioral health and public schools task force created under section 19 of chapter 321 of the acts of 2008, the department of elementary and secondary education shall develop a safe and supportive schools framework. The framework shall provide guidance and support to schools to assist with the creation of safe and supportive schools that improve education outcomes for students.

(c) Subject to appropriation, any city, town or school district, by vote of its school committee, may implement the safe and supportive schools framework developed under subsection (b) in order to organize, integrate and sustain school and district-wide efforts to create safe and supportive school environments and coordinate and align student support initiatives.

(d) The self-assessment tool created by the department consistent with the recommendations of the behavioral health and public school task force created under said section 19 of said chapter 321 shall be organized according to the elements of the framework established under subsection (b), and shall be used by schools to: (i) assess the school’s capacity to create and sustain safe and supportive school environments for all students; (ii) identify areas where additional school-based action, efforts, guidance and support are needed to create and maintain safe and supportive school environments; and (iii) create action plans to address the areas of need identified by the assessment.

The board shall develop procedures for updating, improving or refining the safe and supportive schools framework and the safe and supportive schools self-assessment tool, in consultation with the safe and supportive schools commission established under subsection (g).

(e) Subject to appropriation, any city, town or school district, by vote of its school committee, may develop and implement an action plan to create and maintain the safe and supportive schools framework. The action plan shall be developed by the school principal, in

consultation with the school council established under section 59C of chapter 71, and shall be incorporated into the annual school improvement plan required under section 1I; provided, however, that the district superintendent may approve an alternative process and schedule for developing school action plans. Nothing in this section shall be construed as to limit the ability of the school principal to appoint a team to develop the school's action plan; provided, however, that such team shall include a broad representation of the school and local community and the principal shall attempt to include teachers and other school personnel, parents, students and representatives from community-based agencies and providers.

School action plans shall be designed to address the areas of need identified through the use of the self-assessment tool described in subsection (d) and shall include the following:

(i) strategies and initiatives for addressing the areas of need identified by the assessment; (ii) a timeline for implementing the strategies and initiatives; (iii) outcome goals and indicators for evaluating the effectiveness of the strategies and initiatives set forth in the plan, which may include attendance and graduation rates, bullying incidences, number of student suspensions, expulsions and office referrals, truancy and tardiness rates, time spent on learning and other measures of school success; and (iv) a process and schedule for reviewing the plan annually and updating it at least once every 3 years. School action plans shall be published on the school district's website.

(f) Subject to appropriation, the department shall facilitate and oversee the implementation of the safe and supportive schools framework in schools that vote to develop and implement the framework. The department shall, subject to appropriation: (i) provide technical assistance to schools on using the self-assessment tool and developing school action plans and to districts on coordinating with community service providers and developing strategies to facilitate the district-wide implementation of the framework; (ii) develop and disseminate model protocols and practices identified in the framework; (iii) establish a safe and supportive schools grant program, through which grantees shall pilot and share with other schools an effective process for developing and implementing school action plans; (iv) update its website to include the framework, the self-assessment tool, best practices and other information related to the implementation of the framework; (v) host regional trainings for schools and districts; and (vi) provide administrative support to the safe and supportive schools commission established under subsection (e). Nothing in this section shall be construed as limiting the ability of the department to contract with individuals, external partners or other entities to support the functions established under this section; provided, however, that the department shall consider opportunities for education collaboratives or other regional service organizations to coordinate and disseminate training, technical assistance and information to school districts on the implementation of the framework.

(g) There shall be a safe and supportive schools commission to collaborate with and advise the department on the feasibility of state-wide implementation of the framework. The commission shall consist of 18 members: 1 of whom shall be the commissioner of elementary and secondary education or a designee, who shall serve as co-chair; 1 of whom shall be the secretary of education or a designee; 1 of whom shall be a school superintendent appointed by the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents, Inc.; 1 of whom shall be a school committee member appointed by the Massachusetts Association of School Committees, Inc.; 1 of

whom shall be a school principal appointed jointly by the Massachusetts Secondary School Administrators' Association and the Massachusetts Elementary School Principals Association; 1 of whom shall be a teacher appointed jointly by the Massachusetts Teachers Association and the American Federation of Teachers-Massachusetts; 1 of whom shall be a director of special education or a director of student support services appointed by the Massachusetts Administrators for Special Education; 1 of whom shall be an executive director of an education collaborative appointed by the Massachusetts Organization of Education Collaboratives; 1 of whom shall be a school psychologist appointed by The Massachusetts School Psychologists Association, Inc.; 1 of whom shall be a school social worker appointed by the Massachusetts Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers, Inc.; 1 of whom shall be a school adjustment counselor or guidance counselor appointed by the Massachusetts School Counselors Association, Inc.; 1 of whom shall be a school nurse appointed by the Massachusetts School Nurse Organization, Inc.; 1 of whom shall be an advocate with experience in education, behavioral health and the impact of trauma on learning appointed by Massachusetts Advocates for Children, Inc.; 1 of whom shall be a representative of the Parent/Professional Advocacy League, Inc. appointed by the Parent/Professional Advocacy League, Inc.; 1 of whom shall be a student appointed by the department of elementary and secondary education's student advisory council; and 3 members to be appointed by the secretary of education: 1 of whom shall be a former member of the behavioral health and public schools task force who participated in the development and statewide evaluation of the self-assessment tool; 1 of whom shall be a former member of the behavioral health and public schools task force with experience implementing the framework; and 1 of whom shall be a representative from a community-based organization that provides services as part of the children's behavioral health initiative and that provides mental health services in schools. The commission shall select a co-chair from among its appointees.

The commission shall: (i) investigate and make recommendations to the board on updating, improving and refining the framework and the self-assessment tool as appropriate; (ii) identify strategies for increasing schools' capacity to carry out the administrative functions identified by the behavioral health and public schools task force; (iii) propose steps for improving schools' access to clinically, culturally and linguistically appropriate services; (iv) identify and recommend evidenced-based training programs and professional development for school staff on addressing students' behavioral health and creating safe and supportive learning environments; (v) identify federal funding sources that can be leveraged to support statewide implementation of the framework; (vi) develop recommendations on best practices for collaboration with families, including families of children with behavioral health needs; and (vii) examine and recommend model approaches for integrating school action plans, required under subsection (e), with school improvement plans and for using the framework to organize other school and district improvement processes.

The commission may collect and review data and feedback from schools as the schools complete the self-assessment tool and develop school action plans, and may convene stakeholders to facilitate solutions to challenges as such challenges arise during the implementation process. The commission may request from the department such information and assistance as may be necessary to complete its work.

The commission shall consult with and solicit input from various persons and groups,

including, but not limited to: (i) the office of the child advocate; (ii) the department of early education and care; (iii) the department of children and families; (iv) the department of mental health; (v) the department of public health; (vi) the department of youth services; (vii) the department of developmental services; and (viii) any other parties or entities the commission deems appropriate.

The commission shall prepare and submit an annual progress report concerning the commission's activities with appropriate recommendations, together with drafts of legislation necessary to carry out such recommendations, if any, not later than December 31. The commission shall meet not fewer than 4 times annually. The commission shall submit such annual report to the governor and the clerks of the senate and the house of representatives, who shall forward the same to the chairs of the joint committee on education, the chairs of the joint committee on mental health and substance abuse, the joint committee on children, families and persons with disabilities, and the house and senate committees on ways and means. The first 3 annual reports shall include recommendations regarding: (i) federal funding sources that may support statewide implementation of the safe and supportive schools framework; (ii) training programs and professional development for school staff on creating safe and supportive learning environments; (iii) improving access to clinically, culturally and linguistically appropriate services; and (iv) addressing the administrative functions necessary to carry out the implementation of the safe and supportive schools framework.

SECTION 105. The safe and supportive schools commission established under subsection (g) of section 1P of chapter 69 of the General Laws shall conduct its first meeting not more than 90 days after the effective date of this act.

SECTION 106. Notwithstanding any general or special law to the contrary, the initial safe and supportive schools framework, as required under subsection (b) of section 1P of chapter 69 of the General Laws shall be consistent with the framework recommended by the behavioral health and public schools task force created under section 19 of chapter 321 of the acts of 2008.

SECTION 108. Sections 1, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 13, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 25, 27, 30, 31, 34, 36, 38, 39, 40, 42, 43, 44, 45, 48, 50, 51, 53, 56, 57, 61, 62, 64, 69, 70, 72, 73, 75, 76, 80, 84, 87, 88, 90, 96 and 97 shall take effect on January 1, 2015.