

**BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION
REQUEST FOR BOARD ACTION**

NO.: BHE 26-30

DATE: November 25, 2025

**APPROVAL OF AMENDED GUIDELINES FOR THE MASSEDUCATE, MASSRECONNECT,
AND MASSGRANT PLUS FINANCIAL AID PROGRAMS**

Moved: The Board of Higher Education (Board) hereby authorizes the Commissioner, subject to appropriation, to increase the student Allowance and Support Award threshold from \$1000 to *up to* \$1,200 across the MassEducate, MassReconnect, and MASSGrant Plus programs, and further directs the Commissioner to amend the guidelines for each program, as deemed necessary and appropriate, to implement this change retroactively for all students assessed as eligible for the 2025-2026 academic year; provided further that this amendment shall not negatively impact any students' eligibility for other state financial aid, including any additional allowance and support awards available to eligible students pursuant to the Board's MassGrant program.

Voted: Motion adopted by the BHE on 11/25/2025.

Authority: Massachusetts General Laws c. 15A, §§ 5B, 6, 9, and 16; FY2026 GAA: Chapter 9 of the Acts of 2025 (Line Items 1596-2501, 1596-2418, 7070-0065, and 1596-2414); H4761.

Contact: José Luis Santos, Senior Deputy Commissioner

Robert Brun, Senior Associate Commissioner for Student Financial Assistance

Background

Subject to appropriation, MassEducate, MassReconnect, and MASSGrant Plus are the Commonwealth's premiere financial aid programs that enable eligible students to attend Massachusetts public community colleges (MassEducate and MassReconnect) and four-year public state universities (MASSGrant Plus) at minimal to no cost, by covering the cost of tuition and fees. Each of these programs also provides eligible students with an Allowance and Support Award (also referred to as a stipend) for books, supplies, and other approved costs beyond the cost of tuition and fees.

Beginning with the 2025-2026 academic year, pursuant to summer delegated authority¹ granted by the Board of Higher Education, the Commissioner amended the student eligibility criteria, institutional responsibility, and award amount sections of each program's guidelines to address necessary technical changes and ensure spending for the respective programs fell within limited funding levels set by the FY2026 General Appropriations Act² signed into law on June 30, 2025.³ The amendments included reducing the student Allowance and Support award for books and supplies from \$1200 to \$1000, across all three programs (MassEducate, MassReconnect, and MassGrant Plus). These proposed amendments were a financial control intended to help keep the Department's spending within appropriation levels. The Commissioner subsequently further amended and clarified the programs' guidelines in response to stakeholder feedback received by Department staff.⁴

Need for Further Amendment

Since implementing the initial and subsequently revised guidelines, appropriation levels for state financial aid programs are anticipated to be supplemented with funding that is included in the FY25 closeout supplemental budget.⁵ This additional funding would enable the Department to restore the Allowance and Support Award amount to the prior \$1,200 level. Therefore, additional changes to each program's guidelines are necessary to ensure that eligible students can receive the full \$1,200 stipend this academic year (AY2025-2026) regardless of the initial amount(s) they may have been awarded pursuant to prior guidelines for each of the programs.

Recommendation

¹ BHE 25-51 (Jun. 17, 2025).

² 2025 Mass. Acts c. 9.

³ See BHE 26-01, BHE 26-02, and BHE 26-03 (Sep. 2, 2025).

⁴ See BHE 26-15, BHE 26-16, and BHE 26-17 (Sep. 25, 2025).

⁵ The FY2025 Closeout Supplemental Budget was reported out of Conference Committee and currently includes \$18 Million in supplemental financial aid funding, a portion of which must be used by the Department to restore student Allowance and Support Awards across these three programs to FY2025 levels. H4761,

Staff recommendation is for approval of amendments to each program's guidelines necessary to raise the Allowance and Support Award from \$1,000 to \$1,200 with retroactive implementation of the amendments to the beginning of the 2025-2026 academic year (*i.e.*, an effective date of September 2, 2025).