An Act to Ensure Equal Access to Education for All Students
H432, Rep. Decker

This bill will provide the Commonwealth and local communities with important information to address educational barriers and inequities that students may face due to bias and discrimination on the basis of race, ethnicity, disability, English Learner status, and/or sex.

- **What does this bill do?** This legislation requires the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) to publish data that it already collects in a manner that is analyzed by student subgroups so that it is easier for educators, parents, students, communities, and policymakers to use to improve outcomes for specific groups of students. While data is currently accessible by race, ethnicity, sex, English Learner status, and disability, the current bill would make accessible cross-variable data, as described below.

  ➢ Federal law already requires the state to report certain data in this manner, thus providing access to data for students who fall into multiple marginalized subgroups. This data demonstrates, for example, that while the overall drop-out rate is 4.9% statewide, the drop-out rate for Hispanic students who are English Learners is more than four times higher (over 22%)\(^1\). Without examining this data by subgroup, this stark disparity would not be apparent. This legislation requires DESE to similarly analyze other critical student data, such as data on student discipline, special education, and eventually receipt of specific special education services.

- **How does this bill accomplish its purpose?** This bill does not require schools or DESE to collect additional student data. Rather, it requires DESE to publish already collected data for specific subgroups of students, thus reflecting the multifaceted identities of Massachusetts students.

- **Why is this data important?** Children and youth have complex identities which can impact their education, and this should be reflected in the student data that is reported by the state. This information is critically important to help identify disparities in access to educational opportunities experienced by students who fall into multiple marginalized subgroups.

- **How does this help students?** Once available for public review, this data will better situate educators to address identified disparities in order to ensure that all students have equal access to educational opportunities regardless of race, ethnicity, primary language, disability, or sex.

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\(^1\) DESE’s 2017 4-Year Report on Graduation Rates is available at: http://www.doe.mass.edu/infoservices/reports/gradrates/