



## Lawmakers: Make personal finance a school requirement

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BOSTON -- Personal finance may soon be required curriculum in public schools.

Sen. Jamie Eldridge, D-Acton, and Sen. Barry Finegold, D-Andover, filed separate bills this year aimed at curbing the alarming number of students who find themselves under a mountain of debt.

The lawmakers said every student should understand how to manage money before graduating from high school.

"If we don't make these investments, really all of us as taxpayers will be paying for it in the long run with the foreclosure rate going up, or someone defaulting on their credit card," Eldridge said. "We need to teach students about smart investment."

Finegold's bill proposes adding personal-finance lessons to math curriculum for all students. Topics include credit-card interest, credit scores, rights and responsibilities of renting or buying a home, saving, planning for retirement, and banking and financial services.

"No one wants to default on a loan, because there are absolute consequences," said Finegold. "At the beginning, students will learn about nickels, dimes and quarters, and as you grow up you're figuring out how to balance a checkbook."

Teenagers spend, on average, \$5,400 a year, about 98 percent of what they earn. About 40 percent of it is on clothing, according to the state Office of

Consumer Affairs and Business Regulation.

More students drop out of college due to teen-accumulated debt than for academic reasons.

Personal finance is taught in

some Massachusetts high schools, but it's not required. Fewer than one-third of all states require personal-financial literacy, with New Hampshire the only one in New England.

Finegold said his bill will not cost the state additional money. Eldridge said he is not sure what the financial impact of his bill would be.

A financial-literacy bill was filed by former state Sen. Susan Tucker, D-Andover, last year. It passed in the Senate but never reached the House floor for a vote, said Eldridge.

The Massachusetts Credit Union League of Massachusetts, a lobbying outfit in Marlboro, supports requiring financial-literacy courses in public schools. The group said the programs will give young people the tools they need to carefully manage their money and provide a better life for themselves and their families.

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