



November 4, 2019

Representative Alice Hanlon Peisch, Chair  
Joint Committee on Education  
State House, Room 473G  
Boston, MA 02133

Senator Jason M. Lewis, Chair  
Joint Committee on Education  
State House, Room 511-B  
Boston, MA 02133

Dear Chairwoman Peisch and Chairman Lewis,

On behalf of the Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce, thank you for your continuous efforts to reform the state's Chapter 70 education funding program and your steadfast focus on closing student achievement gaps. As you work to reconcile the differences between House (H.4145) and Senate (S.2365) versions of the Student Opportunity Act ("SOA"), the Chamber strongly urges you to retain the accountability measures included in the bill reported out by the Joint Committee on Education and passed by the House. The Chamber believes strong and transparent accountability measures like those included in the final House bill are necessary to close achievements gaps.

[The Chamber's guiding principles throughout Chapter 70 reform discussions](#) have been the need to close persistent achievement gaps and guarantee that any investment will include the proven changes necessary to ensure results. With \$1.5 billion in new spending it is imperative that the SOA is results-oriented and has discernible impacts on Massachusetts' students. The Commonwealth's residents and our overall economic health rely on a public education system that effectively prepares every student for future success and the workforce.

The accountability measures included in H.4145 are much stronger than those in S.2365. Under the House version of the SOA, districts are required to set targets to close achievement gaps that align with state targets. While the Senate version requires state and district targets, it omits the requirement that district targets align with state targets. Without this requirement, districts may not set aggressive targets for which they will be held accountable. Additionally, H.4145 allows the Commissioner to review the quality of three-year district plans and to require districts to amend plans that are not in compliance with the SOA. The Senate version only allows the Commissioner to recommend amendments to district plans. Finally, H.4145 requires district plans to address several evidence-based best practices listed in the SOA and outline the decision-making process for choosing which practices to implement or not in order to close achievement gaps. S.2365 does not require districts to address the list of best practices in the SOA.

Adequate spending to educate students is important. However, robust accountability measures also are essential to supporting underperforming schools and closing achievement gaps. Pairing new investments with accountability measures will ensure increases in spending result in higher graduation rates, greater student achievement, and better opportunities for all students. Without guideposts and accountability measures for districts and the state, there is no assurance that the new spending included in the SOA will close achievement gaps.

Thank you for your consideration. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'James E. Rooney'.

James E. Rooney  
President and CEO

cc: Speaker Robert A. DeLeo, Senate President Karen E. Spilka, Vice Chair Tucker, Representative Ferguson, Chairman Rodrigues, and Minority Whip O'Connor