

October 4, 2023

Representative Denise Garlick, House Chair  
Joint Committee on Education  
State House, Room 473G  
Boston, MA 02133

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

Dear Chair Garlick and Chair Lewis,

On behalf of the Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce and our 1,200 members, I write to oppose bills H.495 and S.246 because they will damage the Commonwealth's nation leading public education system and dismantle the state's ability to hold districts accountable to students and their families. These bills will lower education standards and strip the state of necessary tools to intervene and support school districts so all children receive a high quality education.

In 1993 and again in 2019, the business community supported substantial increases in funding for our schools in conjunction with high standards for student achievement and a transparent system for measuring progress and results. In 2019, the Chamber supported changes to the state's funding formula only if companion accountability measures were adopted. Importantly, the combination of funding and transparent accountability results in the highest quality education in the country, a key competitive advantage.

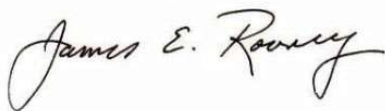
We therefore strongly oppose eliminating MCAS as a graduation requirement. Without regular assessments measuring student outcomes in key areas of learning, the state and districts alike will lose vital information about how to prioritize resources so all students have every opportunity to succeed in their education. Allowing each district to decide what a diploma means will also result in lower expectations for far too many students who will then graduate without the knowledge and skills they need for college and career success. Instead of doing away with the graduation standard, a true commitment to equity requires we focus squarely on helping all students meet it.

MCAS also shines a light on racial and socio-economic achievement gaps that would otherwise remain hidden and identifies school districts that need improvement and intervention. The information that MCAS provides is integral to understanding if the state is meeting its constitutional obligation to provide every student in the Commonwealth with an excellent education. We do not support unnecessary efforts to spend time and resources on a special commission charged with developing an MCAS replacement.

Finally, to meet its constitutional responsibility to assure an excellent and equitable public education for all students, the state needs authority to intervene on behalf of students when schools and districts are chronically underperforming. We oppose provisions that strip the state of that ability.

The Chamber opposes H.495 and S.246 and urges the Committee to reject efforts that will negatively impact the state's leadership position in providing high quality education for all students.

Sincerely,



James E. Rooney  
President and CEO