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**Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, February 28, 2011
Discussion of Task Force on Educator Evaluation
Remarks of Linda M. Noonan, Executive Director, MBAE**

Thank you for the opportunity to represent MBAE and the business community on this Task Force and to present my reflections on its work to date. Ensuring an effective teacher in every classroom is one of MBAE's primary goals. We understand the singular impact classroom educators have on student achievement, as well as the value of contributions by school and district leaders to support teachers and their students. We believe it should be our collective highest priority to attract, develop and retain the very best educators for every child in the Commonwealth.

Business invests heavily in human capital. We therefore understand that the opportunity we have to restructure our educator evaluation system is one that can have an enormous, positive influence on the education workforce in Massachusetts. Unfortunately, despite the good faith efforts of members of the Task Force and staff of the DESE, I am concerned that we have not yet met this challenge; nor are we likely to do so within the few weeks remaining in the Task Force calendar.

- An effective evaluation system recognizes, promotes and rewards excellence. The Task Force has not made this its central objective or dealt with the need for a new evaluation system; instead it has focused primarily upon minor changes to the existing structure. This has occurred despite almost universal agreement that current educator evaluation systems are not operational, at worst, and not meeting the needs of either education professionals or schools, at best. The Task Force composition may contribute to this orientation, since the majority of its members are more familiar with, and perhaps more invested in, the current evaluation system. This is clearly illustrated by the chart of recommendations issued after the last Task force meeting on February 17th which repeatedly references past mistakes rather than presenting meaningful design changes to the system as a whole. The assumption that current procedures will apply in the future hampers our ability to design the framework that the Board has charged us to deliver.

- Teacher evaluations should be based on the same parameters and measures of performance statewide. With agreement on 4-ratings as proposed by the Massachusetts Teachers Association, it is positive to note the movement toward a better instrument than the binary scale used in many districts. Where there is divergence, however, is on indicators that are heavily process-based and not at all results-oriented. Again, a review of the recommendations and Task Force summaries show the emphasis on "inputs" rather than "outcomes" as defined locally. Teach Plus has offered proposals for a robust evaluation system that will better serve students and help retain strong educators. Stand for Children and others have emphasized student growth, learning and achievement supported by practice standards as our paramount goal. The regulations that you will be promulgating should reflect this commitment and require evaluations across the state to apply consistent expectations and measures that provide meaningful information about results.

- Teacher evaluation should be administered as a statewide system, not a district-by-district system. The Task Force's focus to date has been on standards, measures and rules regarding evaluation. Much less attention has been devoted to how to implement the system being proposed. The Task Force has yet to recommend the support and activities a revised evaluation system will require, including statutory language (if necessary), as well as the training and resources to implement, monitor, and continue to improve the new system. Effective evaluation, that delivers "honest, fair, and improvement-oriented feedback", as the Board specified, will take resources – especially time and training – for all involved. It must also fit within the context of state policy, statute, regulation and financial constraints. The only way that a fair, valid and successful evaluation system can be implemented is to do it statewide. If this requires statutory and regulatory adjustments, we encourage the BESE to undertake the work necessary to make these changes.

Finally, there are important topics that have not been fully addressed by the Task Force, including:

- *Linking comprehensive evaluation to personnel decisions* such as tenure, career ladders or licensing
- *Tenure*, which we believe should be meaningful, hard to earn, and accompanied by appropriate recognition.
- *Effective approaches for family and student engagement* in evaluation, as articulated by the Boston Student Advisory Council and other constituency groups

In addition, discussion of *measures of student progress* has been characterized by the limitations of the MCAS in both grades and subjects. There has not been consideration of the changes that can be expected as the state begins to integrate the formative and summative assessments expected for Common Core State Standards into our data.

By convening the Task Force, the Board has solicited input from a broad range of stakeholders and committed educators about the new evaluation system. Now, I would urge you to assemble a small group with demonstrated human resource expertise to address the question of how to measure student performance and professional practice, and how to implement a high-functioning evaluation system that will bring the best educators to Massachusetts schools with the ability to meet our collective goal of educating our children for success in their futures.