



MASSACHUSETTS
BUSINESS ALLIANCE
FOR EDUCATION

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STATEMENT OF MASSACHUSETTS BUSINESS ALLIANCE FOR EDUCATION IN SUPPORT OF H.1853/S.188 – In Support of An Act Relative to Third Grade Reading Proficiency

Good morning. I am Nina Chen, Deputy Director of the Massachusetts Business Alliance for Education (MBAE). MBAE is committed to ensuring that every child in the Commonwealth receives a high quality public education that will prepare them for success in college, career, and citizenship. We are here today in support of H.1853 and S.188 because we understand that achieving that goal begins with early literacy.

Employers recognize that meeting their need for a skilled workforce and equipping our children for lifelong success requires building a strong foundation for learning in the earliest years. According to workforce projections, approximately 68% of all jobs in Massachusetts will require a postsecondary education by 2018. The vast majority of new jobs created already require postsecondary training. Preparing our students to meet the demands of a globally competitive workforce in a knowledge-based economy is necessary not only for our state's economic vitality but also for our children to achieve their own individual potential as productive members of society.

Third grade reading proficiency is a critical benchmark for determining a student's college and career readiness. Reading proficiency in third grade is indicative of a child's ability to learn in any subject. Without meeting this standard, we can not expect a child to excel in other subjects because they do not have the prerequisite literacy skills to comprehend the problem or equation they have to solve or to communicate effectively.

We support the establishment of an Early Reading Council, as provided in the bills before you today, as an initial step toward more aggressive action to ensure that all children are proficient readers by the end of third grade. We hope the Council will be convened quickly and charged with producing its recommendations in a timely and comprehensive way so the education innovations and actions needed for every child to succeed can be put in place.

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