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## **New Report Highlights Strategies to Address Learning Loss in Massachusetts Due to Pandemic**

*Citing recent data on remote learning impacts on student achievement, report makes recommendations to accelerate student learning and achievement*

**BOSTON, Dec. 11, 2023** – Following recently released state and national data detailing pandemic-related student achievement decline, the Massachusetts Business Alliance for Education (MBAE) and the Massachusetts Competitive Partnership (MACP) today released a report outlining policy recommendations and state budgetary investments that would most likely accelerate student learning in Massachusetts. The report, "[Accelerating Student Learning: The Need for Urgency and Innovation](#)," provides evidence for different policy strategies, as well as best practices across the country, in developing detailed recommendations to state leaders.

“We are deeply concerned that many students remain far behind in their learning and that bold actions must be taken at every level of our education system to address this growing crisis,” **said Ed Lambert, executive director of MBAE.**

“The disruption of the pandemic hurt students in every corner of the Commonwealth, and the data is clear: if we do not act with urgency to mitigate that learning loss, its negative impacts will be with us for years and generations to come,” said **Jay Ash, president and CEO of MACP.** “This report lays out flexible yet innovative practices to accelerate student

learning and improve educational outcomes that are so critical to the Commonwealth's overall competitiveness.”

Recent data has found significant learning loss since the start of the pandemic, with Massachusetts student achievement scores falling by 12% in reading and 8% percent in math. In addition, chronic absenteeism in Massachusetts has jumped by 9% among all students since the start of the pandemic, and by 13% for Latina/o/x students. The resulting economic impacts are stark, with gross domestic product over the remainder of the 21st century expected to be 2.5% lower as a result of the pandemic's impact on student learning, resulting in a total economic loss of over \$400 billion.

The report outlines policy and budgetary recommendations in six key areas to address these challenges. (Details on the specific recommendations can be found in the report.):

- **High-Dosage Tutoring** — One of the more popular strategies implemented by district and school leaders to increase student instruction time is high-dosage tutoring. The specific model includes groups of no more than four students who meet the same tutor consistently, during the school day, three times a week for 30 minutes each session, over the course of a semester or more. Tutors should use a structured curriculum that helps students learn grade-level material while filling in individual gaps in knowledge and skills.
- **College and Career Pathways** — Access to college and career pathway programs – or access to key aspects of such programs – can have a transformational effect on a student's ability to find success after high school. The key aspects of beneficial pathway programs are the ability to earn college credit, participate in work-based learning opportunities, earn industry-recognized credentials and receive dedicated career counseling.
- **Early Literacy** — The impacts of the pandemic have created a heightened sense of urgency around early literacy because the data shows an alarming drop in literacy among third-grade students. Massachusetts already had an early literacy challenge before the pandemic, but the impacts of school closures have exacerbated the issue significantly. The report recommends further incentivization and support of this

practice, including evidence-based literacy strategies and significant investments in literacy coaches.

- **Expanded Learning Time** — One of the clearest takeaways from recent national research is the need for a major increase in instructional time to get affected students back on track. The main policy approach to this issue is Expanded Learning Time (ELT), which gives students more instructional time through a variety of strategies that include after-school, summer and in-school programming. These efforts often involve a comprehensive redesign of student and educator schedules.
- **Seat Time Flexibility/Innovation** — Many states, including Massachusetts, have long-standing requirements for how many hours of “seat time” each student must fulfill – as well as what counts as “seat time.” However, the pandemic shifted how many students and families think about what counts as learning time and there is an increasing recognition of how remote learning and hybrid schedules can benefit students. Many alternate approaches to learning – such as remote learning from home outside of traditional school hours, providing credit for daytime work and experiences, and using non-traditional approaches to assessing skill acquisition – have been expanded in the wake of the pandemic and proven valuable.
- **Closing Digital Equity Gaps** — Access to technology and connectivity is essential to student opportunity, and these issues have a significant impact on more than 20,000 K-12 students across the Commonwealth. Many community and business leaders have called for a more urgent response to ensure that more students have the connections they need to succeed in school, including extending one-time matching grants for devices and completing efforts to address internet connectivity.

The report was released today at a panel discussion hosted by MBAE and MACP that addressed the pace of recovery and how the state, legislature and districts can continue to support students. Participants included Commissioner Jeffrey Riley, the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education; State Senator Jason Lewis, chairman of the Joint Committee on Education; Mary Bourque, co-executive director of the Massachusetts Superintendents Association; and Lisa Lazare, executive director of Educators for Excellence. In addition, national expert and CEO of Education Resource Strategies, Karen Hawley Miles, shared a presentation on how to leverage resources to

have the biggest impact on students, as well as evidence-based strategies and best practices to help get students back on track.

Today's release builds upon a MBAE and MACP report from November 2020 — *Choosing a Return to Better: Moving Beyond Normal in the Commonwealth's Return to School and Learning* — that documented the challenges that were on the horizon because of school closures and remote learning while highlighting initiatives to mitigate the pandemic's negative impacts on student learning.

### **About MBAE**

The Massachusetts Business Alliance for Education is a non-profit, non-partisan organization that, together with our members, promotes and supports continuous improvement in our schools and innovation that is needed to ensure that EVERY student receives a high-quality education that prepares them for success in college, career, and citizenship.

### **About MACP**

The Massachusetts Competitive Partnership is a non-profit, non-partisan, 501(c)(4) public policy group comprised of chief executive officers of some of the Commonwealth's largest businesses. The Partnership's goals are to promote job growth and competitiveness in the Commonwealth by working in collaboration with public officials and business and civic leaders in Massachusetts. MACP's mission is to make Massachusetts one of the leading states for business investment, inclusive job creation and overall competitiveness.

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