

October 3, 2023

Joint Statement in Opposition to Lowering Education Standards and Hindering School Improvement Efforts

We, the undersigned, are opposed to H.495/S.246, the so-called “Thrive Act,” legislation that will effectively lower education standards and strip the state of its ability to intervene in and support districts whose students are struggling academically.

In 1993 and again in 2019, the business community supported substantial increases in state funding for education that were accompanied by high expectations for all students and a transparent system for measuring progress and results. As a result of that balance, Massachusetts leads the nation in student achievement, a key competitive advantage for our Commonwealth. This legislation guts key provisions of that deal and dismantles the very foundation of our success.

This legislation risks setting students and entire communities back and will worsen already significant workforce challenges that threaten the state’s economic competitiveness.

We are deeply opposed to the elimination of MCAS as a graduation requirement. Allowing each and every district to decide what a diploma means will 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.

We also oppose provisions of this bill that will prevent the state from having any ability to intervene on behalf of students and families in chronically underperforming districts. In order to meet its constitutional responsibility to assure an excellent and equitable public education for all students, the state needs authority to identify and support districts that are failing students.

Finally, MCAS shines a light on racial and socio-economic achievement gaps that would otherwise remain hidden and identifies schools/districts that need improvement and intervention. The information that MCAS provides is integral to understanding if we are meeting our constitutional obligation to provide each and every student an excellent education. While we believe that MCAS can be improved, we do not support efforts to spend time and resources on a special commission charged with coming up with a replacement.

Edward M. Lambert, Jr. Executive Director Massachusetts Business Alliance for Education	James Rooney President and CEO Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce
---	---

Timothy Murray President and CEO Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce	Christopher Cooney President and CEO Metro South Chamber of Commerce
---	--

Rick Kidder Chief Operating Officer One SouthCoast Chamber of Commerce	Chris Anderson President Massachusetts High Technology Council
--	--

John Davis
Chairman and CEO
Ventry Industries, LLC

Jon Hurst
President
Retailers Association of Massachusetts

Greg Reibman
President
Charles River Regional Chamber of Commerce

Tom O'Rourke
President and CEO
Neponset River Regional Chamber of Commerce

Tamara Small
Chief Executive Officer
NAIOP Massachusetts

Roy Nascimento
President and CEO
North Central Massachusetts Chamber of Commerce

Amy Naples
Executive Director
Plymouth & Duxbury Chambers of Commerce

Bill Walczak
Chair
Massachusetts Business Alliance for Education

Nick Christ
President and CEO
BayCoast Bank

Tricia Canavan
Chief Executive Officer
The Tech Foundry

Henry Dinger
Deputy General Counsel
Goodwin Proctor LLP

Donna Cowan
Steering Committee
Boston Leaders for Education and Philanthropist

Rick Burnes
Steering Committee
Boston Leaders for Education

Tony Helies
Steering Committee
Boston Leaders for Education and Philanthropist

Mimi LaCamera
Retired President Freedom Trail Foundation &
BPS Greenwood School Volunteer

Eileen Rudden
Board Member
Massachusetts Business Alliance for Education &
Co-Founder of Learn Launch

Joe Esposito
Board Member Emeritus
Massachusetts Business Alliance for Education
& Former Chair of the MA Accountability
& Assistance Advisory Council