

# Employers Want the Best for Students & Their Futures

Governor Healey, Speaker Mariano, and Senate President Spilka,

For centuries, Massachusetts defined public education while the rest of the world followed. However, a decline in student performance, stubborn achievement gaps, and a scaled back graduation requirement put our leading position at risk. Failures by adults are driving these changes, but it is the students who will endure the most severe impacts.

As CEOs and senior executives of major Massachusetts employers and board chairs for some of the largest business associations, we have a stake in the Commonwealth’s students. Today’s students will drive tomorrow’s innovation, growth, and opportunity and the skills they learn in classrooms will provide the foundation for future achievement. **As such, we support setting a high bar for achievement for all students in the Commonwealth.**

We support much of the initial recommendations in the Interim Report of the Statewide Graduation Council. Building on that, we urge the Commonwealth to make passing end-of-course assessments a graduation requirement for Massachusetts students. Combined with the proposed curriculum requirements, end-of-course assessments will ensure students have the foundational skills that prepare them to think critically, creatively, and innovatively.

While the curriculum requirements are key and will bring Massachusetts in line with 40-plus other states, the end-of-course assessments add meaning to the coursework. **Students and employers will both benefit if passing the assessments is required for graduation.**

An end-of-course assessment creates an equal opportunity for all students to demonstrate mastery of critical subject matters and skills, regardless of geography or socioeconomic status. Importantly, assessments designed and administered by the state will result in an objective measure that will not vary across towns, districts, or classrooms.

The objective nature of the assessments also enhances credibility. Potential employers or admissions counselors will know exactly what a student had to achieve in order to earn a Massachusetts diploma, rather than having to parse out how a student may have been evaluated. Importantly, assessments provide critical real-world training. Virtually every career is full of situations that demand calm, timely, and focused solutions: clients, patients, students, taxpayers, and others all have expectations, needs, and crises. **We should embrace assessments because they help to prepare students for what life inevitably holds.**

The business community was integral to the 1990s reform that kickstarted enormous gains in student achievement and supported increased investments via the Student Opportunity Act. Now, we strongly urge the Commonwealth to adopt and implement the recommendations laid out in the Interim Report of the Statewide Graduation Council, including using end of course assessments as a graduation requirement. Furthermore, it must be done quickly.

Every year that passes without these requirements in place is one where our students will lose out. **We must not fail our students because this time, the world will not follow.**

SIGNED BY:

- GREG BUSCONE, Chair, Associated Industries of Massachusetts
- COREY THOMAS, Chair, Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce
- BILL WALCZAK, Chair, Massachusetts Business Alliance for Education
- JON BERNSTEIN, Chair, Massachusetts Business Roundtable
- RON O’HANLEY, Chair, Massachusetts Competitive Partnership
- JEAN-CHARLES WIRTH, Chair, Massachusetts High Technology Council
- KRISTIN LEWIS, Chair, Massachusetts Taxpayers Foundation
- SAM KING, MARK LORION, Co-Chairs, Massachusetts Technology Leadership Council
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