



**Massachusetts Association  
of School Committees**

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January 2014**

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**MASSACHUSETTS ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL COMMITTEES  
POSITION PAPER - 2014**

## **SUPPORTING AND FUNDING OF TECHNICAL EDUCATION**

### **Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Improvement Act of 2006 (PL-109-270)**

The Massachusetts Association of School Committees (MASC) urges the Massachusetts Congressional delegation to support full funding of the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Improvement Act. Currently, Massachusetts public school districts receive more than \$17.9 million in federal aid under the program.

Over the past several years the Congress reaffirmed its support of the act by funding it with a discrete budgetary line item and resisting the proposal to fold vocational and technical funding into a block grant proposal.

MASC strongly supports an increase in appropriations for the Perkins Act for 2015.

For over twenty years, the “Perkins Act” has provided financial assistance to Massachusetts public schools, including funds to the state’s higher education system. The law not only provides resources to foster innovation and program improvement, but also encourages state level support with a “maintenance of effort” provision. Perkins Act funding is available to all Massachusetts public schools with approved vocational and technical programs.

During Fiscal Year 2014 Massachusetts receives Perkins Act funds under two Perkins categories, a “Basic Grant” and a “Technology-Preparatory” Program. Total funding to Massachusetts for the current fiscal year is over \$17.9 million based on the continuing resolution in effect at this time.

The Perkins Act, last reauthorized in 2006, and the relatively modest but essential appropriation that supports it are in jeopardy as congress determines whether to renew the statute and fund it adequately. Last year the Congress rejected again an Administration proposal to consolidate funding into a block grant – a measure that would have effectively placed all Perkins programs in jeopardy.

Perkins Act funding supports program improvement, career and technical education student activities. The appropriation provided in the Act also fosters initiatives to integrate technical education with career development and basic academic curricula, as well as support for appropriate guidance and career counseling services. Modest allocations for capital equipment are available. The Act also encourages and supports professional development for faculty in vocational and technical education. As with the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, there is a detailed accountability system.

As with any federal program, the law is complex and incorporates many provisions. MASC is particularly concerned with maintaining the current structure and supporting the critical goals and objectives.

More specifically, we also support maintaining the Act and its appropriation as a discrete set of programs and line items, as opposed to incorporating its provisions within other, more broad federal education laws – a strategy that could, if adopted – dilute the strength and focus of the program.

We anticipate that the Administration will pursue once again its plan to cut significantly the federal appropriation for the Perkins Act. or make detrimental adjustments to it. We have learned an important lesson with the recent reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, also known as No Child Left Behind. Any change in public education law should be scrutinized carefully for the full impact, short term or in the long run.

MASC is working closely with our membership in the Association for Career and Technical Education (ACTE) so that we can articulate carefully for you more specific information and to alert the Congressional delegation about the potential budget reductions and conceptual changes that may be proposed by advocates for students and the Administration.

However, in the meantime, we urge members of the Massachusetts Congressional Delegation to support a full appropriation for the Perkins Act and to weigh carefully any proposals to re-focus the law from its current mission, reduce the level of federal resources available to vocational technical programs, and weaken the administrative support for Massachusetts school districts.

The network of vocational technical schools in Massachusetts represents a successful model of education for many students who become among the state's most productive citizens. As with school districts in general, the combined forces of an economic recession, state budget cuts, local fiscal crises, and a virtual assault of not less than five current and often conflicting assessment systems from various state and federal laws are straining further the ability of the many local policy makers, administrators, teachers, parents, and advocates to cultivate a strong vocational and career program in Massachusetts.

However, we have always enjoyed the strong support of the Massachusetts Congressional Delegation.

We remain ready and eager to provide whatever assistance and support our delegation requires in 2014.

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