



**Massachusetts Association
of School Committees**

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

REAUTHORIZATION OF THE HIGHER EDUCATION ACT

As Congress begins to deliberate the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act, the Massachusetts Association of School Committees has recommendations concerning public policy matters that may be incorporated into the revisions to the Higher Education Act. While there are important matters relative to administration and support for various undergraduate and graduate programs, we wish to address those items that have an impact on students, as well as teaching and learning in the traditional pre-kindergarten through high school levels.

We urge the Congress to consider the following matters that are of great interest to our members:

- Support for programs that facilitate the training of teachers, including expanding opportunities for many undergraduates to access courses that can prepare them for teaching careers. This includes teacher preparation at both public and private institutions of higher education for students who may wish to have the option of training for a career in teaching, counseling, or leadership in schools.
- We encourage expansion of programs of financial assistance, including loan forgiveness programs to individuals pursuing college and graduate education, especially to those who are preparing for careers as teachers.
- We strongly support improving access to post-secondary education for all students, particularly low-income, first-generation and students with disabilities. Early intervention programs like GEAR Up (Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs) allows many low-income students to begin preparing for higher education while still in middle school and high school.
- We encourage the availability of financial assistance through a simplified process of obtaining student loans that may be forgiven in full or in part in exchange for service in schools that serve students who are chronically underperforming or where social and economic conditions warrant specialized training and ongoing support.
- We recommend that reforms in teacher preparation programs be evidence-based on consideration for the quality of instruction and success of those students who graduate and bring their skills to the pre-kindergarten through high school classrooms.
- We encourage the development of special training for educators who will pursue careers in vocational and technical education, English Language Learner programs, special education, services to students with physical disabilities, and service in districts where recruitment and retention of teachers pose a significant challenge.

For further education, contact:

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