



**Joint Committee on Education Public Hearing
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Testimony Submitted By:

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**RE: H.4375, A message from His Excellency the Governor recommending legislation
relative to reforming education**

Chairman Antonioni, Chairwoman Haddad, Members of the Committee, thank you for this opportunity to provide comments on the Governor's education reform legislation and the next phase of education reform.

Since 1991, when the Massachusetts Business Roundtable (MBR) released its first report on education reform, we have been working collaboratively with the Massachusetts Business Alliance for Education (MBAE) on a long range agenda for K-12 education reform. In that 1991 report, we called for fundamental changes in the education system including: a clearly defined planning process to set aggressive goals and measure progress against those goals; the flexibility and authority necessary for educators to allow their schools to thrive; and strong leadership at all levels to implement these changes.

Many of the proposals in H.4375 are consistent with these goals and we commend the Governor on his important contribution to this dialogue. In particular, the Governor's focus on the increased challenge of global competitiveness, promoting math and science excellence, and enhancing teacher professionalism are consistent with the focus and concerns of the members of MBR's Education Task Force and deserve your attention.

In a report released this past summer, the national Business Roundtable confirms the fears of Governor Romney and business leaders by citing warning signs that America's traditional leadership in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) is eroding. The report points to "measurable declines in US innovation, such as patents and scientific articles, to soaring numbers of students in Asia majoring in these fields, to US students' lagging interest and measured performance in math and science."

The report goes on to say that, "This generation faces an entirely new challenge, both at home and abroad. Any number of countries, including England, France, Germany, China, India, Israel, Japan and others, are educating and training their citizens and competing with—and, in several cases beginning to surpass—the United States for talent to develop new technologies, new cures, new frontiers. If we take our scientific and technological supremacy for granted, we risk losing it. What we are lacking at the moment is not so much the wherewithal to meet the challenge, but the will."

In response to these warnings, the Massachusetts Business Roundtable has convened a series of CEO Innovation Roundtable meetings which have provided an opportunity for members of the corporate and academic worlds to share their views on the challenges facing Massachusetts in retaining its preeminence in innovation. Among the themes that were identified was the need to develop a competitiveness strategy for the region, including investments in STEM teaching and learning. Recognizing this challenge, the Legislature created the STEM Pipeline Fund and MBR supports this effort. Similarly, we serve on the Steering Committee of the Great Schools Campaign and support its recommendation for new investment in Massachusetts' math and science teachers. Finally, we share the national Business Roundtable's recommendation to "promote market- and performance-based compensation and incentive packages to attract and retain effective math and science teachers." The business community confronts the challenges of a new global economy every day and supports the work and focus of the Legislature and Governor Romney to address it.

In addition, MBR agrees with Governor Romney that enhancing teacher professionalism is a necessary component of the next phase of education reform based on research that has consistently shown a strong correlation between teacher quality and student achievement. MBR is involved with a comprehensive proposal to address educator quality which is being coordinated by Teachers 21 (Teachers for the 21st Century). That proposal, H.4157, addresses the issues of teaching and leadership in a way that is both comprehensive in scope and positive in nature. It seeks to increase the rigor of supervision and evaluation for teachers and administrators, while upgrading the skills and requiring greater accountability of the evaluators. The bill also focuses professional development funds on direct improvement of instructional leadership, teaching, and learning and aligns professional development with school and district improvement goals and student results. The investments in H.4157 are designed to help support and build successful careers for our most important capital assets in public education – our teachers – and subsequently improve outcomes for children which, of course, is our ultimate goal. MBR supports this approach.

Finally, there are two areas not included in the Governor's legislation which MBR feels are critical to the next phase of education reform. Pre-k -12 is part of an education continuum which begins in a child's most formative years and continues well beyond high school. First, MBR is a member of the Early Education for All Campaign because we share in the belief that for Massachusetts to remain competitive in an increasingly global economy, we must make targeted investments in the education of our children that yield the most positive returns. Research has conclusively shown that early childhood education is one of these areas. The Legislature clearly understands this, and is to be commended for the leadership and commitment it has made in creating the new Department of Early Education and Care.

Second, the pre-k -12 system must work collaboratively with the public higher education system to ensure that graduates of the Massachusetts public school system are prepared for the demands of the new economy. As employers look to fill today's jobs and ensure a pipeline of workers for the future, it is imperative that our public higher education institutions are provided the tools necessary to meet those demands.

MBR's 1991 report urged business to "do whatever we can to directly assist education professionals in the implementation of change." More than a decade later, we still believe this to be true and stand ready to assist your Committee as you embark on the next phase of education reform.