



Joint Committee on Education
Hearing on Accountability, Assessments, and Governance
October 4, 2023
Gardner Auditorium

Chairman Lewis, Chairwoman Garlick, and Members of the Committee, thank you for this opportunity to provide comments on H.495 / S.246, "An Act empowering students and schools to thrive."

In the recent 2023 CNBC Top States for Business rankings, Massachusetts was rated among the best states for Education and this past summer, WalletHub rated Massachusetts the best state to live in the country, similarly driven by the state's top ranking for Education. In Massachusetts, our competitiveness calling card is talent and our education system, and it has been for decades. Whether it be NAEP, U.S. News and World Report, or other state rankings of education systems, Massachusetts is perennially a national leader.

This has implications for the state's competitiveness. When Lego decided to move its headquarters to Massachusetts, leasing 100,000 square feet and bringing more than 700 jobs, its president of the Lego Group in the Americas cited Boston's "deep talent pool" and "innovative business environment" as the reason for the move according to the Boston Business Journal. Similarly, just this week it was announced that another S&P 500 company, Veralto Corporation, is locating its headquarters in Waltham. Its CEO was quoted in the Boston Globe as saying, "the Boston metro area stood out in large part because of the talented workforce here and a large international airport." The head of MassEcon, Pete Abair, which helped attract Veralto to Massachusetts said, "workforce won the day, no doubt. This is a nice win for Massachusetts."

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. A balance of sufficient funding and accountability for results continues to be a key competitive advantage for our Commonwealth. The Roundtable opposes efforts that would undercut that success. Lowering the high school graduation standard, as these bills

propose, will worsen already significant workforce challenges that threaten the state's economic competitiveness.

At the Roundtable, our policy agenda is based on three principles: Opportunity; Equity; and Competitiveness. We believe they are not mutually exclusive, and that competitiveness is contingent upon opportunity and equity. The information that MCAS provides is integral to understanding if the state is meeting its constitutional obligation to provide every student an excellent education. Accountability measures effectively shine a light on racial and socio-economic achievement gaps that would otherwise remain hidden and identifies schools and districts that need improvement and intervention.

We agree that MCAS can be improved. That is a policy conversation that should occur and one in which the business community would be happy to engage. However, efforts to undo decades of progress of education reform based on the fundamental model of standards and accountability is misguided and a concern for the future competitiveness of the Commonwealth.

Thank you for your consideration, leadership and kind attention to our concerns.