

# MASC LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES – 2021

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MEMBERSHIP BRIEFING

APRIL 2, 2021

# RETAIN SCHOOL COMMITTEES AS A POWERFUL VOICE FOR OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNANCE

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- Preserve the fiduciary responsibilities over budget and school finance.
- Remain vigilant to attempts by DESE or any other branch of government to eliminate local governance through involuntary district consolidation.
- Encourage and incentivize district collaboration and regionalization provided the affected communities support it.

# FULL FUNDING FOR THE STUDENT OPPORTUNITY ACT

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- Chapter 70 Increments over seven years
- Charter School Mitigation Funds
- Regional Transportation
- Special Education Transportation

Federal Stimulus Funds should help make these commitments viable.

# SPECIAL EDUCATION CIRCUIT BREAKER

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- Provides 75% reimbursement for Special Education cases over about \$45,000 in cost.
- Full funding requires \$392,338,170 (Consensus figure.)
- Should include 4-year phased in funding for SPED transportation.

# RETENTION OF MEDICAID REVENUES

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- Allow school districts to receive and retain Medicaid and other reimbursements for SPED services covered by Medicaid/MassHealth and Medicare.
  - 150,000 children in Massachusetts are Medicaid-eligible
  - 80,000 children collect Social Security benefits.
  - 20,000 youngsters receive Medicare as disabled, dependent children.

# METCO – FULL FUNDING

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- Supports the enrollment of inner-city students to suburban schools in Greater Boston and Greater Springfield.
- Over 50 years as a successful opportunity for students.

# EARMARKING SPECIAL FUNDING FOR SMALL AND RURAL DISTRICTS

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- Support districts with small and/or declining enrollments in communities with limited economic growth.
- Berkshire County Education Task Force is a great example.
- Implications for Barnstable, Berkshire, Hampden, Hampshire and Franklin Counties.

# ENCOURAGE LOCAL AGREEMENTS FOR VOCATIONAL AND TECHNICAL SCHOOL ADMISSIONS

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- MASC recommends that municipalities and regional vocational technical schools develop up to date protocols for admitting students.
- Protocols should be reasonable, workable, and non-discriminatory.
- MASC urges the legislature and DESE to avoid a heavy-handed regulatory approach to the admissions process.

# DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION: Including Concerns of Native Americans in Massachusetts

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- Diversity, equity and inclusion are key academic, social and legislative priorities for MASC and the National School Boards Association.
- Among the initiatives and priorities is addressing the status of Native American families in Massachusetts.
- MASC urges the legislature to promote meaningful consultation, support dialogue, seek establishment of a continuous improvement platform, and promote increased educational opportunities and advancement the well-being of Native students
- Congratulations to the Mashpee School Committee for national recognition.

# COUNTING STUDENTS WHERE THEY LIVE

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- Count all students based on the communities in which they live.
- Provide support to mobile, migrating, and immigrating students when they arrive.

# RECOGNIZING AND RESPECTING THE RIGHT TO PRIVACY FOR STUDENTS AND FAMILIES

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- The legislature should ensure that access to student data be limited to appropriate sharing/use only.
- Testing data should not be shared with external agencies or companies without informed consent and permission of parents/students.

# STRENGTHENING THE CHILDREN'S SERVICES SAFETY NET

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- Legislative support for the agencies that serve children and families including:
  - General Health Care including Mental Health Services
  - Access to Comprehensive Health Insurance
  - Children's and Family Services Agencies
  - Child Care Services
  - Juvenile Justice System and Institutions Serving Clients Under 22
  - Adequate Housing for Families
  - Agencies that Provide Food

# RETHINKING THE PURPOSE OF STANDARDIZED TESTING DATA

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- MASC urges the legislature to prohibit high stakes testing/graduation requirement.
- Use testing data for diagnostic rather than punitive purposes.
- Study the effective use of testing to determine appropriateness of MCAS at lower grades.

# CHARTER SCHOOL OVERSIGHT AND REFORM

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- Charter school operators are quietly building their bases.
- MASC urges local approval before siting a charter school where it is not wanted.
- Requirements to enroll a cross section of economic, racial and at risk populations.
- Some element of local oversight.
- Require Economic and Academic Impact Study prior to creating or expanding a charter school.

# INCENTIVES FOR STUDENTS TO BECOME AND REMAIN EDUCATORS

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- Encourage more colleges and universities to offer teacher training.
- Provide incentives for teachers to work in economically and socially need districts.
- Offer loan forgiveness for teachers who remain on the job.

# BUILDING A LEADERSHIP TRACK FOR ASPIRING ADMINISTRATORS

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- Encourage districts to provide leadership tracking for aspiring teachers, lower level administrators, and aspiring central office staff and superintendents.
- Replicate programs like Influence 100 to train minority administrators.
- Provide mentorship and coaching to new administrators.

# RESTORE THE OPEN MEETING LAW TO ITS ORIGINAL INTENT

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- Permit school committees, city councils, select boards, and town councils to act as their own initial screening and interview committees when selecting the chief executive officers of the school district, city or town.

# LOBBYING FOR YOUR PRIORITIES

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- Our lobbying guide was developed by MASC's Legislative Committee and can be downloaded from our website ([www.masc.org](http://www.masc.org))
- Legislators tell MASC that several things affect the effectiveness of a lobbying effort:
  - Knowing and trusting the person doing the lobbying
  - Getting accurate, truthful and helpful information
  - Establishing a record of credibility

# LOBBYING FOR YOUR PRIORITIES

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Two very helpful maxims explain why you have an advantage at the legislative lobbying effort:

- Former US House Speaker Tip O’Neill, who served on the Cambridge School Committee before going to Congress, is famous for saying that **“All Politics is Local.”**
- Ralph Wright, the legendary and long time Speaker of the Vermont House of Representatives wrote a whole book called, **“All Politics is Personal.”** (He was originally from Somerville, MA)

# LOBBYING FOR YOUR PRIORITIES – Using Your Position as a Local Leader

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As a school committee member, you are both local and personal when it comes to your legislators and even congressional delegations.

As you know, when a constituent speaks directly to you, and delivers a personal message about something important to them, you take note.



# LOBBYING FOR YOUR PRIORITIES – Working with Legislative Staff

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Here are some other important tips for effective lobbying:

- Work closely with the legislator's staff. First, lawmakers rely on their staff to help them form their opinions and gather information
- During critical pressure points in the lawmaking process, the staffs are usually at the side of the legislator helping execute their own strategies
- Many current legislators started as staffers on Beacon Hill. It's a great opportunity to develop relationships with them

# LOBBYING FOR YOUR PRIORITIES

## Communicating with Legislators and Staff

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Be visible and use media carefully to make your positions known. You should establish yourself as a credible local leader.

Be patient and understand the legislative process. It can take a long time – sometimes years – to succeed.

**Brief is Good.** Political analyst Peter Damborg: “Spend words as you would spend your own money.” Legislators have limited time. As you know from your own public comment periods, once you lose their attention, it’s hard to get it back.

# LOBBYING FOR YOUR PRIORITIES

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If you present written material, include a brief executive summary to make your point.

- It's about winning in the long run, and not about prevailing at the moment.
- **People who use children as props, or who grandstand to get their names into the newspaper or broadcast media, or who embarrass legislators in public may win the moment or carry the day, but they ultimately suffer damage to their credibility for doing so.**

# LOBBYING FOR YOUR PRIORITIES

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Remember to thank the legislators for what they do.

- School Committee members know better than anyone how few people say “Thanks.”
- You can remember every one of those who said “thanks” to you.