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Massachusetts Association of School Committees

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Boston— Representatives of Massachusetts Association of School Committees (MASC) commend the Senate President and the state Senate working group for “listening to the concerns of local public school leaders and developing the most comprehensive plan to reform charter schools in decades. We applaud the working group for their hard task of developing consensus on one of the most intensely debated issues of education reform,” said MASC President Jake Oliveira of Ludlow.

“Accountability of charters through local approval by cities, towns and regional school districts, as well as financing and equitable charter admissions are among our top priorities,” said Oliveira.

Oliveira also noted that several public policy changes approved by school committee members at their 2015 assembly in Hyannis were incorporated in the proposal. MASC cited the breadth and scope of the outlined charter reform policy that would improve charter operational integrity, accountability, teacher credentialing, recruiting practices and policies on student retention. “Oversight, by school committees, through a designated seat on charter school boards of trustees for parents and community members is important to hold charter schools accountable to the taxpayers of cities and towns.”

Local control, charter finance, and equitable charter admissions and retention are among the issues that require specific scrutiny and we are anxious to review the proposal to see how thoroughly these matters are dealt with,” he explained.

“We are happy to see that the consensus proposal links a new “smart cap” increases to funding of overall school finance reforms over the next 7 years,” said MASC Past President Patrick Francomano of the King Philip Regional School Committee who served on the Foundation Budget Commission that made its recommendations on school funding in November 2015. Francomano remarked further that “while there is commitment to mitigation funds when students transfer to charter schools those funds are subject to appropriation and even if they survive the budget process they don’t reflect the cost to the sending district.”

MASC officials said they looked forward to having the details of a formal bill shortly and to review the official proposals with school committee members across Massachusetts over the next few weeks. “We will be looking carefully to close all loopholes charters have been using to avoid serving students with the most challenges,” said Patrick Murphy of the Barnstable School Committee who had identified the tactics used by charter schools on Cape Cod at the Cape Cod Legislative Forum three weeks ago.

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