

REGISTER NOW: DAY ON THE HILL

Thursday, April 14 (virtual format)

Day on the Hill is MASC's annual legislative advocacy day. Typically, this event brings hundreds of school committee members, superintendents and student leaders to the State House in Boston to meet with the executive and legislative leadership as well as local senators and representatives. This event is an increasingly critical moment for MASC members to advance the message of the value of public education and ensure that legislators and other key decision/policy makers understand the issues and challenges that you confront and that they can support.



Although MASC had been hoping to invite members back to the State House for our annual Day on the Hill, the persistence of the Covid variant and other logistical challenges around State House scheduling necessitates postponing that in-person return until 2023.

Instead, as we did last year, this important opportunity to advance the message of the role of public education in preparing the next generation of engaged, college and career-ready citizens, will be offered in a Zoom format, at no charge. The MASC Board of Directors invites all school committee members and other school leaders to join legislators and other key education and fiscal policymakers in a vital conversation about lessons learned in the Covid crisis, and strategies for moving forward, creatively, and sustainably, to address new challenges.

The focus of this year's event: What have we learned? What must we fix? What can we build on? will be discussed

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IN MEMORIAM

Clifford G. Fountain 1934-2022

MASC regrets to inform members of the passing on March 14 of Cliff Fountain, a 30+ year member of the



Quaboag Regional School Committee representing the town of Warren.

A passionate supporter of quality education and opportunities for all children, Cliff

served on numerous local, county, and state organizations as an advocate for students and public schools. At MASC, he was a leading member of the Association's Regional Schools Committee, Technology Committee, Legislative, and Student Assessment Committee among others. A regular participant at MASC conferences, meetings and other programs, Cliff frequently served as the district's delegate to MASC's Annual Meeting where he contributed

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Early Education and Care: Economic Review Commission Report

The Acts of 2020 established the Special Legislative Early Education and Care Economic Review Commission to study the funding structure for early education and care and ways to support the Commonwealth's goal to expand equitable access to high quality programs. The Commission, chaired by Senator Jason Lewis and Representative Alice Peisch, met from April 2021-February 2022 and released their findings last month. Those findings are summarized below.

At the outset, the report acknowledged that investing in the first years of children's development is critical, and of the need to maximize investments in early learning environments in order to close the existing opportunity gaps.

Access to reliable, high-quality early education and care is a strong driver of a healthy economy; a recent multi-state analysis found an average annual loss of \$1 billion per state in economic activity due to early education and care challenges. Mothers have disproportionately scaled back their hours or left the labor force to care for their children during

the pandemic. Low income families and families of color have been disproportionately negatively impacted by the pandemic, and have been less likely to afford high-quality programs and are more likely to have relied on programs that closed during the pandemic.

The Commission's recommendations focused on key action steps to stabilize and build a high-quality, well-functioning early education and care system, and identified four focal areas as critical to addressing this charge.

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NATIONAL NEWS

FY2022 APPROPRIATIONS BILL ADDS DOLLARS TO EDUCATION FUNDING

The FY2022 appropriations bill signed by President Biden last month includes important increases to the following education-related line items.

Student Financial Assistance:

The bill provides \$24.6 billion for Federal student aid programs, an increase of \$35 million above the FY2021 enacted level. Within this amount, the bill provides:

- \$6,895 for the maximum Pell Grant, an increase of \$400, the largest maximum award in more than a decade.
- \$895 million for the Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant program, an increase of \$15 million.
- \$1.21 billion for Federal Work-Study, an increase of \$20 million.

Early Childhood Education:

Early childhood education programs receive an increase of \$558 million above the FY2021 level.

- \$6.2 billion for the Child Care and Block Development Grant, an increase of \$254 million.
- \$11 billion for Head Start, an increase of \$289 million.
- \$290 million for preschool development grants, an increase of \$15 million.

K-12 Education:

A total of \$76.4 billion in discretionary appropriations for the Education Department, an increase of \$2.9 billion.

- K-12 Education, including Individuals with Disabilities Education Act programs: the bill provides \$42.6 billion, an increase of \$2 billion. Within this amount, the bill provides:
 - \$17.5 billion for Title I grants to Local Educational Agencies, an increase of \$1 billion, the largest increase in this program in more than a decade.
 - \$14.5 billion for Special Education, an increase of \$448 million. This amount includes:
 - \$13.3 billion for Part B grants to states, an increase of \$406 million.
 - \$1.6 billion for Student Support and Academic Enrichment state grants, an increase of \$60 million.

- \$124 million for Magnet Schools Assistance, an increase of \$15 million.

The full bill can be accessed at: <https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-bill/2471/text>

SUPREME COURT RULES ON SCHOOL BOARD RIGHT TO CENSURE

In a case relevant to K-12 school boards dealing with disruptive members, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled unanimously late last month that a community college board's censure of one of its members over his speech did not violate the First Amendment.

Briefs filed in the case touched on numerous examples of K-12 school boards censuring their members, and the court's decision stands by the authority of boards to carry out such formal reprimands. A number of school boards have recently censured members over offensive outburst or social media speech on hot-button issues such as COVID-19 protocols.

Writing for the court in *Houston Community College System v. Wilson*, Justice Neil Gorsuch described his opinion as a "narrow one" about "purely verbal censure." The case did not address questions concerning legislative censures accompanied by punishments or those aimed at private individuals.

David Wilson, one of nine members of the Houston Community College board of trustees, was censured in 2018 after several years of speech and conduct that the board viewed as bringing turmoil. This included filing lawsuits against the board over some of its decisions, and encouraging others to sue as well. The board reported he made anti-gay remarks and objected to the inclusion of sexual orientation in the community college's non-discrimination policies. Following the colleges vote to open a campus in Qatar, over Wilson's opposition, he orchestrated robocalls to the constituents of other board members and hired private investigators to check a fellow board member's residency according to court documents.

The board's censure resolution said that Wilson had "demonstrated a lack of respect for the board's collective decision-making process, a failure to

encourage and engage in open and honest discussions in making board decisions, and a failure to respect differences of opinion among trustees."

In the opinion, Gorsuch noted that elected bodies in this country have long exercised the power to censure their members. The US Senate issued its first censure of a member in 1811 and the House did the same ten years later. In 1954, the Senate "condemned" Senator Joseph McCarthy, citing his conduct and speech both within that body and before the press. Gorsuch further noted that Congress has censured members not only for objectionable speech directed at fellow members but also for comments to the media, public remarks disclosing confidential information, and conduct or speech thought damaging to the nations.

And such censures are even more common by state and local elected bodies, he said.

The Houston community college board was supported in its appeal by the National School Boards Association and its state affiliate, the Texas Association of School Boards. Their friend-of-the-court brief argued that censure is a necessary tool for boards to respond to members who fail to come to meetings, disclose confidential information, interfere with school district staff, or engage in sexually inappropriate behavior.

MA NEWS

HYBRID HEARINGS PART OF HOUSE'S LONG-TERM PLAN

MA House leaders will work toward keeping legislative committee hearings accessible outside the halls of the State House next year and beyond, setting their sights on a formal "hybrid" model while indicating that emergency rules governing the chamber's operations will remain in place into January.

With the State House once again open to the public and COVID-19 cases holding at lower levels, the House Reopening Working Group sent an update to representatives late last week outlining the next steps for hearings, tours, building ventilation, and House deliberations.

Several committees have started to host hearings from rooms in the reopened State House, allowing members and guests to participate in-person while generally keeping livestreams available for remote viewers and participants.

"As we look towards next session, the House will work with the Senate to formalize a hybrid hearing model that allows in-person participation at hearings while retaining the benefits of remote access," the working group wrote.

In the meantime, House leaders urged committees to keep remote participation possible for hearings but to also permit anyone testifying in-person to physically attend hearings at the State House.

Before COVID-19 hit, most legislative hearings were not broadcast or recorded by state government, limiting participation only to those with the means and availability to travel to Beacon Hill during the workday. The broad usage of livestreamed hearings has opened up access to hearings to many more people.

Senate leaders have not indicated if they are also working on a formal hybrid hearing policy, but Senate President Karen Spilka has touted the

increase in public participation due to virtual access options.

Another COVID-era reform will remain in place in the House, with elected lawmakers being allowed to debate and cast votes remotely until the end of the 192nd Legislative Session, which wraps up on Jan. 3, 2023.

MASC PEOPLE IN THE NEWS

SPRINGFIELD SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEMBER CO-AUTHORS REPORT ON COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

LaTonia Monroe Naylor, a member of the Springfield School Committee, Vice Chair of MASC's Division X (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion) and co-founder of Parent Villages, recently co-authored an article on the importance of community engagement as districts assign COVID funding. The article, which appeared in *CommonWealth* magazine's March 22 online newsletter, was written with Dinanyili Del Carmen Paulino, a parent of public school students and chief operating officer of La Colaborativa in Chelsea.

Naylor and Paulino outline the challenges that students and their fami-

lies have faced during the pandemic and suggest strategies for moving forward.

It is essential, they say, that "we collectively recognize that collaboration between schools and families is more critical than ever. Only by working together will we be able to address the social-emotional and academic impacts of the pandemic, and tackle long-standing educational inequities that have been magnified during this time." As district leaders are currently deciding how to use unprecedented financial resources from the federal government and additional state funds being distributed under the 2019 Student Opportunity Act, they have a unique opportunity to foster that collaboration. Unless families are part of the discussion about how to best use these funds to help address inequities in student learning experiences and outcomes, districts will not successfully implement effective new strategies to support students.

To read the full article: <https://commonwealthmagazine.org/education/community-engagement-key-as-schools-deploy-covid-aid/>

Tips for Effective Lobbying

Reach out to your legislators: BEFORE you need them

- Develop relationships: learn about your state senators and representatives. Many of them began their careers as school committee members or as student representatives to their school committees. Make connections with them and establish yourself as a resource on local school issues.

- Invite your legislators to attend one of your meetings: they could share insights on school-related legislation that is currently under consideration and/or you could update them on district concerns that might require legislative action.

- Set your priorities: Be a school issues resource for your legislators, but don't approach them with your whole wish-list. Pick those issues that are of most concern to the district.

- Be specific: Give examples of how particular

programs are being implemented in the district and the impact of those programs on your students/teachers/families.

- Be persistent: Highlight your concerns. Stick to them. But don't be obnoxious.
- Be brief: At the end of the day, your impact is not measured in the amount of time you took up meeting with your legislator. Be direct, but be concise.

- Strength in numbers: Seek out allies. If other districts have similar issues, include them in your lobbying efforts.

- The media and your message: Share your issues with your local media but make sure to have all your facts in order.

Mind your manners: If an issue fails to get legislative approval, don't take it out on your legislators. Thank them for their efforts on your district's behalf no matter the outcome.

Early Education continued from page 1

KEY FINDINGS

1. PROGRAM STABILIZATION

- Both subsidized and private-pay programs in MA struggled before the pandemic due to a precarious business model dependent on limited public funds, high family fees, and low wages for teachers.
- Additional instability and financial challenges stemming from the pandemic, including reduced enrollment, higher operating costs, new health and safety requirements, and a growing workforce shortage make it even harder for programs to stay afloat.
- The one-time nature of federal recovery funds to support program stability makes it difficult to commit to meaningful increases in compensation and other programmatic improvements.
- Increasing access to reliable care allows parents to work. Investing in quality is necessary for long-term positive impacts for children.

2. FAMILY AFFORDABILITY

- MA consistently ranks as one of the least affordable states for early education and care. On average, families spend 30% more on infant and toddler care than they do on rent. Many families pay between 20-40% of their incomes for care.
- The application process, lack of awareness of resource and referral agencies, and waitlists can deter eligible families from accessing care.
- Subsidy reimbursement rates are currently insufficient to

cover market rates, leading many providers to forgo accepting subsidies and limiting the availability of subsidized slots.

3. WORKFORCE COMPENSATION, PIPELINE, AND ADVANCEMENT

- Insufficient compensation for the early education and care workforce is a systemic and serious barrier to recruitment and retention which is important for program stability and children's development.
- To professionalize and support the workforce, a comprehensive career pathway is necessary. This pathway should articulate skills by role and age group and clearly define associated credentials.

4. SYSTEM INFRASTRUCTURE AND LOCAL PARTNERSHIPS

- Additional system infrastructure is needed to support the oversight and implementation of grants, policies, regulations, and research.
- The physical environment is a critical component of program quality, however the high cost of renovations, expansions or new facilities can impact the ability to expand capacity.
- Local partnerships between school districts and community-based programs, as well as shared service alliances have a promising impact on program capacity, quality and programming.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on these findings, the Commission developed immediate, short-term, and longer-term recommendations by focal area (see Exhibit E-2 at left) Many of these are interdependent. Fully implanting these will require upwards of \$1.5 billion annually over time and substantial additional resources will be necessary, requiring a combination of increased federal funding as well as increased state funding and/or consideration of other alternative measures, such as requiring businesses of a certain size to provide an employee benefit for early education and care similar to current healthcare requirements.

Exhibit E-2. Recommendations by Focal Area			
	Recommendation	Timeline	Cost Estimate
Focal Area 1: Program Stabilization			
1	Continue operational funding to programs through at least calendar year 2022 to stabilize early education and care programs in response to pandemic challenges, with priority for programs serving high-need children	Immediate	\$480 million annually
2	Make permanent policy of reimbursing programs that serve subsidized children based on enrollment versus attendance	Immediate	\$4-\$5 million annually
Focal Area 2: Family Affordability and Access			
3	Raise subsidy reimbursement rates and develop cost modeling to determine the true cost of funding a system of high-quality care	Immediate	\$100-\$200 million annually
4	Engage in review of subsidy regulations and policies and provide additional navigation support and outreach to families	Immediate	\$6-\$12 million annually
5	Serve additional families who are already eligible for subsidies and then increase the income eligibility threshold to serve more families via the subsidy system	Short Term	\$350-\$850 million annually
6	Engage with the business community to identify and promote employer best practices and explore incentives for employers to support additional early education and care benefits for their employees	Short Term	TBD
7	Implement additional strategies to expand capacity in underserved communities and for underserved populations, including investing in facilities needs	Longer Term	TBD
Focal Area 3: Workforce Compensation, Pipeline, and Advancement			
8	Increase workforce compensation through program grants and rate increases and support the early education and care needs of the workforce	Immediate	See Recommendations 1 and 3
9	Develop and implement a career ladder and competency-based credentialing system that includes aligned professional development and a new compensation scale	Immediate	TBD
10	Utilize existing state structures to build an early education and care workforce pipeline via targeted workforce development strategies and expanded access to higher education and advancement opportunities	Short Term	TBD
11	Explore additional strategies to increase workforce retention including tax credits for early and out of school time educators, higher education loan forgiveness, and additional scholarship supports	Longer Term	\$20 million-\$30 million annually
Focal Area 4: System Infrastructure and Local Partnerships			
12	Provide additional resources to the Department of Early Education and Care to support management of new state policies, programs, and initiatives, including: improving family navigation of the subsidy system; enhanced and integrated data systems; and the simplification of public facing processes	Immediate	\$5-\$15 million annually
13	Support local partnerships across the mixed delivery system	Short Term	\$10 million annually
14	Implement and evaluate local shared services and quality hubs to increase program operational capacity, support the provision of comprehensive services, and encourage ongoing program improvement	Longer Term	\$1 million for pilot
<small>Note: The estimate in recommendation 5 assumes current subsidy reimbursement rates, 75% of families with working parents, and a 50% take-up rate. If the reimbursement rate is raised, the cost estimates will increase significantly. The number of eligible families who apply for and receive subsidies and the number of programs which accept subsidies will also impact these costs. \$350-\$400 million annually would serve additional families already eligible for subsidies (up to 50% of SMI); \$400-\$450 million more annually would serve additional families if the income threshold increases to 85% of SMI.</small>			

Day on the Hill 2022

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in conjunction with MASC's recently released legislative priorities. Moderated by MASC President Andrea Wadsworth (who recently testified before the Joint Ways and Means Committee), the discussion will include highlights of the legislative agenda for 2022 (see below for the listing and the website for an in-depth rationale of MASC priorities); key initiatives around child abuse and student health and safety; and reports on efforts around regional school transportation funding and assistance for small and rural districts. The program will also include in-office presentations to MASC's 2020

and 2021 Legislators of the Year: Senator Joan Lovely, Senator Becca Rausch, and Senator Jason Lewis.

As the largest body of elected public officials, school committee members are in a unique position to collaborate with legislators and help them understand the challenges in your district—what's working well, what isn't—and offer guidance and suggestions that they can support in this current budget season.

There is no charge to attend but we ask that you register in advances so we can send you the sign-on link and background materials. *The Zoom link will be available on the confirmation page after registering, and sent to the email address you use when you register.*

Clifford Fountain

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insight and experience to discussions of various proposed resolutions.

In 2000, he received MASC's Lifetime Achievement award and three years later was awarded Life Membership in the Association for his contributions to education in service of students. In 2011, he was named a member of MASC's 2011 All-State School Committee.

Day on the Hill Guest Speakers

- **MASC President Andrea Wadsworth** (Welcome)
- **Jason Fraser**, Chair, MASC Legislative Committee (Legislative Update)
- **Senator Jason Lewis** and **Representative Alice Peisch** (Co-Chairs, Joint Committee on Education)
- **Senator Joan Lovely** (Assistant Majority Leader)
- **Senator Becca Rausch** (Joint Committee on Children, Families and Persons with Disabilities)
- **Representative Paul Mark** (Rural Caucus Co-Chair and Speaker's appointee to the Rural Policy Advisory Commission)

MASC LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES: 2022

The MASC Board of Directors has endorsed the following legislative priorities for 2022. For more in-depth background on these public policy issues, as well as the Board's rationale for supporting them, refer to the full posting on the MASC website: <https://www.masc.org/images/events/2022/DOC040422.pdf>

- Full funding for the Student Opportunity Act
- Support for Children's Services Safety Net
- Full funding for the Special Education Circuit Breaker
- Support for public policy that promotes Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion
- Earmarking special funding to study efficiencies and economies for small and rural districts
 - Rethinking the appropriateness of testing and accountability
 - Retention of Medicaid reimbursement for covered services
 - Charter school oversight and reform
 - Full funding for METCO program
 - Vocational Technical school enrollment
 - Annual tribal consultations
- Establishing incentives for the most potentially competent people to become educators
- Retaining a powerful voice for the community in the oversight and governance of its public schools
 - Right to privacy as a matter of equity
 - Update Open Meeting Law
 - Expedited release for districts in receivership

UPCOMING EVENTS

Thursday, April 14
MASC DAY ON THE HILL
(virtual)
9:30am-12:30pm

Friday, May 6
MASC Learning Lunch:
ESSER update
Noon-1:00pm

Saturday, May 14
Charting the Course:
8:00am-4:00pm
Student Representatives
Forum: 8:30am-Noon
Essex Tech., Danvers

Saturday, May 21
Charting the Course, Franklin
County Voc. Tech., Turners Falls
8:00am-4:00pm

Friday, June 3
MASC Learning Lunch:
Goal Setting
Noon-1:00pm

Saturday, June 11
Charting the Course, Upper
Cape Voc. Tech., Bourne
8:00am-4:00pm

Saturday, September 17
Charting the Course, Pittsfield
High School
8:00am-4:00pm

Saturday, September 24
Charting the Course, Canton
High School
8:00am-4:00pm

CHECK YOUR MAILBOX



MASC members and superintendent secretaries/administrative assistants were recently mailed MASC's 2022 Form Booklet. This includes forms for Life Membership/All-State School Committee/Lifetime Achievement, Resolutions, and 2022 Presidents' Scholarship. Forms are also posted on the MASC website.

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