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Media Contact:
Elizabeth Mahoney
elizabeth@mhtc.org
617-842-5693

Statement from the Massachusetts High Technology Council on the Testimony that will be Provided at the Joint Committee on Education's Hearing

Today, the Massachusetts High Technology Council will offer testimony to the Joint Committee on Education in opposition to legislation that would undermine the standards and accountability system that has made Massachusetts a national leader in education.

Eliminating the statewide MCAS graduation requirement, as the Thrive Act would do, would be an abdication of the state's obligations to provide quality education to all children and do a disservice to the students of Massachusetts, particularly those in underperforming school districts.

The Commonwealth's strong national rankings for our public education system have helped to produce and attract a talented workforce, fostering a positive atmosphere for businesses to thrive. Lowering the high school graduation standard would worsen existing workforce challenges and threaten the state's economic competitiveness.

"The MCAS exam has proven to be a reliable indicator of a student's college and career readiness and eliminating it as a graduation requirement would amount to a huge step backward in the Commonwealth's quest to ensure that all Massachusetts high school graduates acquire a basic mastery of the subject areas needed to be successful in their futures," said High Tech Council President and former Chair of the State Board of Education, Chris Anderson. "It is critically important to the Massachusetts economy that the state retains a strong statewide standard for success for all of our students and not walk away from the accountability system that has helped make Massachusetts a national leader in education."

Ensuring Massachusetts high school graduates have the skills measured by the MCAS will benefit both students and the state's employers. According to the High Tech Council's [Technology Workforce Dashboard](#), jobs in tech occupations are expected to grow by 13% over the next five years, compared with 5% growth over the last five years. [Brown University research](#) shows that "high school MCAS scores predict long-term success and appear to reflect students' academic skills" not simply socio-economic status or school characteristics.

[Data shared](#) at the September 19, 2023 meeting of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education illustrates the tremendous value of the current statewide graduation standard in place in Massachusetts and underscores why eliminating this statewide assessment would be so detrimental to students.

Contrary to the arguments of those who wish to eliminate the use of the MCAS exam as a graduation requirement, the MCAS is not a barrier to graduation for the vast majority of

students. The data shows that there are only 1% of students, about 700 statewide, for whom passing the test is the sole barrier to graduation. Both the state and local school districts should focus on ensuring those 700 students reach the bar the state has set, rather than eliminating a statewide graduation requirement for all students.

The data revealed that since the MCAS exam graduation requirement has been in place, graduation rates in Massachusetts have increased, with scores increasing for students traditionally marginalized, like students of color and those from economically disadvantaged communities.

The High Tech Council urges the Legislature not to walk away from the education reforms that have proven so successful in Massachusetts.

About the Massachusetts High Technology Council

The [Massachusetts High Technology Council, Inc.](#) is an organization of CEOs and senior executives representing innovation, technology, and scientific companies, professional services firms, and research institutions dedicated to collaborating to create and sustain conditions that support investment, job growth, and improved quality of life in Massachusetts. Our members are growth-oriented, knowledge-intensive employers and institutions that develop, deliver, and depend on technology and scientific products, services, and innovations to advance their organizational objectives—a definition that covers just about all business enterprises in Massachusetts today. Our mission is to help make Massachusetts the world’s most attractive place to live and work, and in which to create, operate, and grow businesses within the innovation ecosystem.

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