

Resolution calling for passage of Question 2 to replace the MCAS graduation requirement

WHEREAS, access to a high-quality, publicly funded education is a guaranteed right written into the Massachusetts Constitution; and

WHEREAS, the goal of public education is to teach students essential, foundational skills such as reading, writing and arithmetic, and to develop critical thinkers, engaged citizens and lifelong learners; and

WHEREAS, the bedrock of the Commonwealth's world-class public education system is strong, statewide standards that are uniform throughout our public schools; and

WHEREAS, the MCAS is significantly limited in its ability to accurately and effectively measure whether students are meeting the Commonwealth's standards and developing the skills they need to thrive after high school; and

WHEREAS, the most effective measures of whether students are meeting our strong, statewide standards and developing the skills they need to succeed in college, the workforce and beyond are educator-led assessments such as projects, papers, tests and group activities that are conducted throughout the school year; and

WHEREAS, the punitive use of MCAS as a high school graduation requirement has restricted curriculum and shifted the focus of education in our public schools toward meeting a test score instead of fostering an environment of creativity, critical thinking and real teaching and learning that helps students realize their full potential; and

WHEREAS, pediatricians, researchers and school counselors have warned of the severe impact of high-stakes testing like the MCAS graduation requirement on students' mental health and well being; and

WHEREAS, standardized test requirements notoriously stack the deck against students of color, ESL students, and those with learning disabilities; and

WHEREAS, using MCAS testing as a high school graduation requirement has prevented or delayed thousands of students from earning a diploma, thereby interrupting or derailing education or career plans, with especially harmful impacts on students of color, low-income students, students with disabilities and students for whom English is their second language; and

THEREFORE, let it be resolved that the Haverhill Public Schools School Committee supports passage of Question 2 to replace the MCAS graduation requirement and require instead that districts certify that students have satisfactorily completed coursework demonstrating mastery of the skills and knowledge required by the Commonwealth's strong, statewide standards in order to graduate.