



CPS
18 Tremont Street, Suite 320
Boston, Massachusetts 02108
Phone: (617) 227-3000
Fax: (617) 227-3453
Email: office@citizensforpublicschools.org

**An Act to Enhance the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System to
Ensure that all High School Graduates meet the State's Standards
(The MCAS Reform Bill – H.561)**

Lead Sponsors: Representative Carl Sciortino and Senator Pam Resor

Co-Sponsors: Rep. Frank Smizik, Rep. Alice Wolf, Rep. Tom Sannicandro, Senator Pat Jehlen, Senator Cindy Creem, Rep. Denise Provost, Rep. Ben Swan, Rep. Doug Petersen, Rep. David Linsky, Rep. Sarah Peake, Rep. Mike Festa, Senator Steve Tolman, Rep. Ruth Balsler, Rep. Mike Rush, Rep. Matt Patrick, Rep. Willie Mae Allen, Rep. Steve D'Amico, Senator Harriette Chandler, Senator Dianne Wilkerson, Rep. Kay Khan, Rep. Liz Malia, Rep. John Keenan, Rep. Pam Richardson, Rep. Tom Calter, Rep. Tom Conroy, Rep. Kathi Reinstein, Rep. Alice Peisch, Rep. Christine Canavan, Rep. Paul Kujawski

Introduction:

The 1993 Education Reform Act called for a system of multiple assessments to determine whether or not a high school student had reached a sufficient level of competence to earn a diploma and graduate. However, when the Board of Education began to implement the new standards, it developed MCAS instead: a single set of high-stakes tests requiring a minimum passing score for students to graduate from high school.

While the MCAS has been an important evaluation tool and a key part of broader efforts to invest in and improve our public schools, the use of the standardized tests as a must-pass graduation requirement has contributed to unintended consequences, including:

- x Increased drop-out rate and lower graduation rate
- x Narrowing of curricula and “teaching to the test”
- x Inflated scores that don't reflect real learning
- x Extreme pressure on students to perform on high-stakes exams
- x Decreased motivation to learn
- x Diversion of school resources away from non-tested subjects/activities
- x Ignoring important student strengths that standardized tests do not measure: creativity, problem solving, critical thinking and diligence

What This Bill Does:

1. Directs the board of education to create a High School Graduation Requirements Committee which will be given the responsibility of developing a multiple assessment system to determine student competence. The committee will consist of 31 members appointed by organizations representing a wide spectrum of affected parties and educational authorities.
2. Ensures that multiple formats and measures be used to gauge competence, and provides for students who do not meet minimum standardized test scores the opportunity to offset their scores with other measures of performance.

3. Provides that, until the committee develops and implements the new graduation requirements, no student shall be denied a diploma for failing to obtain a passing score on the MCAS.

Supporting Organizations:

Massachusetts Teachers Association • Citizens for Public Schools • Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents • Massachusetts Association of School Committees (MASC) • Massachusetts School Psychologists Association • ACLU of Massachusetts • Coalition for Authentic Reform in Education (CARE) • FairTest • Center for Collaborative Education • AFT MA _ Associated Advocacy Center – Visions for the Future, Inc. • Massachusetts PTA • Black Educators' Alliance of Massachusetts (BEAM) • Neighbor to Neighbor • METCO • Jewish Alliance for Law and Social Action (JALSA) • Massachusetts Coalition for Equitable Education • Alliance for the Education of the Whole Child _ Coalition for Social Justice _ Greater Boston Civil Rights Coalition (GBRC) _ Springfield Education Association _ Brookline Educators Union _ Work-4-Quality Schools, Fight-4-Equity _ South Middlesex NAACP Branch _ Brazilian American Association (BRAMAS) _ Massachusetts Administrators for Special Education (ASE) _ Massachusetts Secondary School Administrators' Association (MSSAA) _ Mayor Scott Lang, New Bedford _ Promise the Children _ Mass EnglishPlus Coalition _ The Center for Teen Empowerment _ Boston Teachers Union (BTU) _ Boston City Council _ Boston Arts Academy's Parent/Caregiver Council _ Community Change _ Education Action