PRESS RELEASE – March 16, 2021

To: Governor Charles Baker
Secretary of Education James Peyser
DESE Commissioner Jeffrey Riley
M.A.S.S. Executive Director Tom Scott
MEDIA News Outlets

From: Massachusetts School Administrators’ Association (MSAA)

Subject: MCAS Testing During the COVID 19 Pandemic

The MSAA is in full support of the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents (MASS) recent position and appeal to cancel MCAS testing for the 2020-2021 school year. Our position was clearly established and articulated in a position paper published in October 2020.

The MSAA Position: DESE must apply for a waiver for the statutory and regulatory student testing requirements of the federal Elementary and Secondary Schools Act (ESSA). Once a waiver is granted, DESE must work with the legislature to waive the statutory and regulatory testing requirements for the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) for the 2020-21 school year.

The concerns raised by the superintendents and shared by school administrators throughout the Commonwealth provide a strong rationale for canceling the MCAS tests for this school year. The common concerns center around: Equity in the conditions for learning and quality of instruction vary from school district to school district; Instructional time has been lost due to the pandemic and imposing traditional testing protocols on already understaffed and overwhelmed systems is unreasonable; School Based Leadership Time should be focused on managing student and staff safety, planning for the return to full “in-person” learning, not on administering standardized tests; the results of this year’s MCAS testing will not provide a valid measure of student growth or achievement when compared to norms and standards of any previous year; Social and Emotional health of our staff and students has been tested to a point where our schools should not be adding to their
stress level with standardized testing that will not be valid.

We agree and support the superintendents’ contention that student growth and accountability should be left to assessment measures implemented at the local school district level. Each district has its own unique circumstances and challenges for providing a quality education during a pandemic. They are in the best position to measure the progress of their students, identify students not making progress, implement intervention strategies supporting those who have fallen behind, and plan for returning our students back to full time “inperson” learning. This is a more reasonable use of time educating our students as we hope to restore our schools back to a sense of normalcy.

Our resolution: The MSAA Board of Directors join the superintendents and request that the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) seek a waiver from the US Department of Education pursuant to the assessment and accountability requirements as defined in the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). Seeking this waiver will send a message to our students and stakeholders that “we are all learning new ways of doing things…and we (the Commonwealth of Massachusetts) remain committed to the well-being and growth of every student” (DESE).

Respectfully submitted on the behalf of the Massachusetts School Administrators’ Association (MSAA).

Kathleen Duff, MSAA President, duffk@newton.k12.ma.us
Larry Murphy, MSAA Assistant Director, lmurphy@msaa.net