



FUND OUR FUTURE



PUBLIC HIGHER EDUCATION FUNDING

The Cherish Act (SB.741/HB.1214)

An act committing to higher education the resources to insure a strong and healthy public higher education system

An independent report on higher education finance has found that, accounting for inflation and changes in student enrollment, allocations to public higher education in Massachusetts have been cut by 31 percent since FY01. The same report found that the share of higher education costs borne by students and their families shifted dramatically over this same period, from approximately 30 percent in FY01 to approximately 55 percent by FY16.

The impacts of this chronic underfunding are keenly felt by both our students and our dedicated faculty and staff. The *Cherish Act*, filed by Sen. Jo Comerford (D-Northampton) and Reps. Sean Garballey (D-Arlington) and Paul Mark (D-Peru), would reaffirm the state's commitment to public higher education by:

- ⇒ **Implementing the core finding of the 2014 Higher Education Finance Commission**, resulting in more than \$500 million in additional funding for public higher education. These new funds must supplement — not supplant — existing funding.
- ⇒ **Establishing in statute a fair and adequate minimum funding level for public higher education** at no less than the FY01 per-student funding level, adjusted for inflation.
- ⇒ **Freezing tuition and fees for five years**, as long as the Legislature appropriates the funds required to reach FY01 per-student funding levels in five years.

The presidents of all 29 public colleges and universities have endorsed the *Cherish Act*, which has 116 sponsors in the House and Senate.

Passing the *Cherish Act* means:

- ✓ Ending the downward spiral in state funding for public higher education. Investing in public colleges and universities improves the quality of life in Massachusetts and benefits the state's overall economy. Employers are increasingly turning to state universities and community colleges to provide a skilled workforce.
- ✓ Addressing the crushing debt placed on students and families who rely on our public colleges and universities. The average student debt in Massachusetts is \$37,172, and the cost of attending a public college in Massachusetts rose faster than in any other state. The public option is becoming as out of reach as private colleges for working families.
- ✓ Hiring more full-time educators and improving working conditions for poorly paid adjuncts and professional staff, who have no access to benefits. Adjunct faculty members are not only exploited, they also cannot participate in student advisory or campus governance roles, to the detriment of colleagues and students.
- ✓ Improving the physical condition of our campuses, which have undergone the deferral of maintenance for years, and relieving some capital debt.
- ✓ Reversing cuts made to professional and classified staff on our campuses.
- ✓ Funding programs that support students from traditionally underserved populations, as outlined in the state Board of Higher Education's "Equity Agenda" adopted in 2018.

For more information about the *Fund Our Future* campaign, visit
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