

A CALL TO SUPPORT THE EXPANSION OF THE MASSACHUSETTS EARLY COLLEGE INITIATIVE

We write as part of a broad, diverse statewide coalition that is seeking to expand the Massachusetts Early College Initiative by respectfully asking the Legislature to support increased state funding through two specific line items:

- Dual Enrollment Grant and Subsidies (7066-0019): grow current funding from \$3M to \$7.4M to fund critical credit reimbursements for the State's higher education institutions
- Early College Programs (7009-6600): maintain current funding at \$2.5M for planning and implementation grants and administrative costs

EARLY COLLEGE IS A STRATEGIC AND TIMELY INVESTMENT

A college education is a gateway to economic opportunity and social equality. The COVID crisis has had a devastating impact on Massachusetts' already significant equity gaps in postsecondary enrollment and success. Expanding the Early College Initiative will play a critical role in closing these gaps and helping with the Commonwealth's economic recovery:

- Educational attainment rates have risen since the early 2000s, but the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated gaps, particularly for low-income and students of color, for whom immediate fall enrollment is down 20%
- Early College saves students money, time, and builds critical momentum for students' postsecondary success. Students graduate from high school with significant college credits, and with the confidence, habits, and skills needed to be successful in both college and career
- Early College serves students that are underrepresented in postsecondary education. In Massachusetts, two-thirds of Early College students identify as Black or Latinx, and nearly half are economically disadvantaged

EARLY COLLEGE IS AN EVIDENCE-BASED PROGRAM, WITH STRONG NATIONAL AND LOCAL OUTCOMES

- Rigorous Coursework: Early College students thrive in their rigorous college coursework, and are 27 percentage points more likely than students with similar educational profiles to complete MassCore
- College Access, Enrollment, and Persistence: Early College students continue to complete their FAFSA forms at significantly higher rates during COVID-19. They attend college at a rate 22 percentage points higher than their peers. 59% of Early College graduates of the class of 2019 are still in college, vs. 38% of their peers
- National Results: two separate "gold standard" randomized controlled trials show that Early College students complete college at double the rate of their counterparts. Preliminary data in MA suggests that we are on track for such college completion rates

EXPANDING EARLY COLLEGE AND SERVING THOUSANDS MORE STUDENTS

- Just 1.6% of Massachusetts high school students are enrolled in designated Early College programs in a limited number of communities across the state
- A lack of reliable and adequate funding prevents Massachusetts from having a thriving, sustainable Early College Initiative
- Growing and sustaining the Early College Initiative requires modest costs, and necessitates increased state funding

Massachusetts can accomplish the above with a strategic investment in the Early College Initiative, helping students (and their families) make the most of the high school experience, increasing the odds for a more affordable and successful college experience, while also building a stronger, and more diverse skilled workforce.

For these reasons, we ask that you support the funding proposed in the line items referenced above -- a proposal that was endorsed by the Early College Joint Committee (approved September 2020) and by the Board of Higher Education (approved October 2020).

Many thanks for your consideration and service,

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* Please Note: This list is still in formation