



July 22, 2020

Dear Representative:

We write to you on behalf of the organizations that represent educators across the Commonwealth of Massachusetts regarding H.4860, *An Act to reform police standards and shift resources to build a more equitable, fair and just commonwealth that values Black lives and communities of color.*

It has become clear in recent days that our unions' position on this legislation, as well as S.2820, continues to be misrepresented by some outside stakeholders. Our unions have formal internal processes for reviewing and taking positions on legislation, and this bill has not yet gone through those processes. To be clear, however, we are in strong support of the historic steps the House and Senate are taking toward dismantling systems of racism and white supremacy inside our public institutions that have for too long devalued, dehumanized and criminalized Black and brown lives.

As educators, we see the impacts of institutional and structural racism every day in our classrooms and on our campuses. The legacy of disinvestment in public schools and colleges has denied far too many students of color their right to equal educational opportunities and has only widened the racial inequities in our society. The House and Senate rightfully acknowledged the racial disparities in public preK-12 schools by passing the *Student Opportunity Act*.

Yet we know now more than ever that still more work must be done to deconstruct systemic racism in public education. We ask that you join us in this effort by supporting Amendment 1 filed by Representative Lindsay Sabadosa. This amendment ensures that the decision on whether to have a police presence in schools rests with local communities, and it elevates a dialogue among school leaders and the community about how to ensure that the full range of mental, emotional and physical safety needs of students can be met. It is essential that any debate on police reform include solutions to the clear racial disparities in school-based discipline and arrests that too often force students of color out of public schools and into the criminal justice system. We believe this amendment will do so.

In addition, we support the adoption of Amendment 99 filed by Representative Christine Barber. Fourteen states and the District of Columbia have authorized licenses for all qualified drivers, and it is past time that Massachusetts did so as well. It will make our roads safer and protect undocumented immigrants from racial profiling, which leads to unwarranted arrests, ICE detention and family separation. In addition to the fact that this amendment enhances public

safety, it is a way of dismantling another structure of institutional racism, and it should be included in this bill.

We understand that many of the changes needed to truly address systemic racism will not be easy. This moment demands that we take meaningful steps to address this issue now, and our organizations stand ready to partner with you in this effort in the days and weeks ahead.

Thank you for your attention to this vitally important issue.

Sincerely,

Merrie Najimy
President
MTA

Beth Kontos
President
AFT Massachusetts

Jessica Tang
President
BTU