

Educators and education advocates across the Commonwealth are coming together to pass a ballot question that will:

REQUIRE THAT DISTRICTS CERTIFY THAT STUDENTS HAVE MASTERED THE SKILLS, COMPETENCIES AND KNOWLEDGE OF THE STATE STANDARDS AS A REPLACEMENT FOR THE MCAS GRADUATION REQUIREMENT.

With a goal of making sure that all children can receive a high-quality public education that allows them to reach their full potential and thrive, this ballot question would align Massachusetts with the 41 states that don't use a single, high-stakes test to deny diplomas to high school students. It would require instead that districts certify that students have demonstrated through satisfactory completion of coursework that they have mastered the skills, competencies and knowledge required by the state standards. While passing the MCAS would no longer be a graduation requirement, students would still take the MCAS, as required by federal and state law.

The harms caused by the inappropriate, high-stakes uses of the MCAS are well known:

- Denying diplomas based on the MCAS hurts the quality of education in all communities because too much classroom time is devoted to preparing for and taking the test.
- MCAS scores are not an accurate or fair measure of student achievement – teachers' classroom assessments are much better.
- Students thrive when educators can focus on engaging with students and getting them excited about learning, rather than getting them stressed about high-stakes tests.
- The MCAS graduation requirement leads to narrowing of the curriculum.
- Some students' strengths are not measured well by standardized tests. To deny those students a high school diploma if they have shown through coursework that they have met the state standards causes serious, lasting and unnecessary harm to those students.
- Some students are still learning English or have learning disabilities that make the MCAS a poor measure of their skills, competencies and knowledge. Denying them a high school diploma for that reason is inappropriate.
- A disproportionate number of Black, Latinx, low-income and English Learner students, as well as students with disabilities, are denied diplomas due to failing MCAS, when they have fulfilled all local graduation requirements.

This ballot question will ensure that students learn the content and skills required by the state standards in order to graduate. But it will rely on the more effective forms of assessment that educators and schools use every day and will end the practice of students being denied a diploma because of a single, high-stakes test.