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September 8, 2015

The Honorable James E. Timilty, Senate Chair
The Honorable James M. Murphy, House Chair
Joint Committee on Public Service

Re: Part-Time Faculty Health Insurance Trust Fund

Dear Chairman Timilty and Chairman Murphy:

I am writing to request your favorable consideration of House 2402 "An Act establishing a Massachusetts State Universities' Part-Time Faculty Health Insurance Trust Fund."

In August of 2014, the Massachusetts Teachers Association/Massachusetts State Colleges Association (MTA/MSCA) reached an agreement with the Board of Higher Education to seek legislative creation of a Trust Fund dedicated to expenses from health insurance premiums for part-time faculty of the MSCA day unit (also known as "adjunct faculty"). House 2402 establishes this trust fund, which will be used to administer funds that will be used to help offset the cost of providing eligible employees with health insurance.

This agreement between MSCA and the Board of Higher Education was the result of discussions related to the phased in implementation of the Affordable Care Act (ACA). Under current state law, employees of Massachusetts state universities and colleges are seen as being employed by an individual university or college. Under the ACA, employees of all sectors of state government will be deemed to be employees of the Commonwealth. In January of 2016 the state will be required to either provide approved health insurance to all of its employees who work 30 hours or more per week or pay a fee. Under current state law, an adjunct faculty member who works 15 hours per week at two different state universities is ineligible for health insurance coverage because they fail to reach the hours needed in one institution to be a "part-time" employee.

Under ACA, this adjunct employee would be seen as working 30 hours per week and the state will be required to provide the employee with an approved health insurance plan or pay a fee.

In 2006, the state implemented a law that requires all private sector employers with more than 10 full-time employees to provide a "fair and reasonable" premium contribution toward health insurance for their employees. It is an unfortunate irony that Massachusetts, the state used as the model for the ACA, currently refuses to provide health insurance coverage that it mandates for

the private sector. It is even more concerning that the state may soon be forced to pay a fee for its failure to provide adjunct faculty with health insurance.

The MTA encourages the Commonwealth to treat its part-time employees fairly by rectifying this long-standing discrimination. We ask you to support efforts to provide adjunct faculty in our public higher education institutions with access to affordable health insurance.

The creation of a trust fund is an important first step in ensuring that Massachusetts maintains its commitment to providing universal health insurance coverage to all its citizens.

Your support of House 2402 is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Barbara Madeloni
President, Massachusetts Teachers Association