

MSCA Delegate Assembly

MTA EC - Report

April 29, 2022

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OVERVIEW:

As my 3-year term as the Higher Ed Representative on the MTA Executive Committee nears completion, I can point to several key issues that I am happy to say have been enhanced over that time period.

- The first points toward the role of higher education in the work of the MTA. Higher Ed members have often lamented the fact that MTA tends toward a K-12 focus more so than on issues pertinent to Higher Ed. While sheer numbers can account for some of that, priorities are also to blame. However, over the past several years there has been a concerted effort to bring Higher Ed issues to the front, particularly funding, student debt, and adjunct issues, of the MTA agenda. This was evident in the 2021 Annual Meeting where the entire delegate body, when asked to vote on priorities for the upcoming year, identified adjunct justice and affordable higher education, within the top 3. In addition, public higher ed funding has been central in the Fair Share campaign and in the MTA's budget priorities addressed to the legislature.
- The second issue points toward the need for increased communication between MTA and the Higher Ed locals. I have tried to do my part here by sending detailed notes to higher ed leaders about MTA board and executive committee happenings. In addition, this past year I also published a member newsletter (roughly 6/year) to help keep members abreast of this information. I have worked to encourage local leaders to share this newsletter with their members.

MTA EVENTS & PRIORITIES

Rather than summarize the vast number of happenings in the MTA from the past year I will focus only on current and upcoming issues and events that seem most important to our members.

MTA Annual Meeting

Will be held in-person (with vaccine, mask, and other safety requirements) and with a remote option, at the Hynes Convention Center on May 20 & 21. In addition to regular business, a new president and vice president of the organization will be elected at this time.

FY2023 Budget

In their letter of budget priorities sent to the House & Senate, the MTA requested:

- Reinvestment in our Public Higher Education – due to critical underfunding and current high levels of inflation, our public higher education system is in crisis. We would like major increases in investments to:
 - 1.\$3.5 million increase to invest in student success programs
 - 2.\$25.5 million increase to the MassGrant Plus program
 - 3.\$11 million operating expense increase for Community Colleges
 - 4.\$33 million operating increase for State Universities
 - 5.\$49 million operating increase for the University of Massachusetts
 - Continued Implementation of the Student Opportunity Act – Fully funding the six-year phase in of SOA and include the impact of inflation. This means increasing Chapter 70 education funding by a total of \$98 million over the governor's budget recommendation.

American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Update

In the next round of ARPA spending, the MTA is requesting revenue to fund:

- \$100 million in reserve to provide scholarships and student debt-elimination to expected licensed educators, with a focus on diversifying the educator workforce. This includes \$50 million in funding to revive the modified version of the Tomorrow's Teacher Program and \$50 million in funding to expand the educator pipeline which include loan repayment support for educational expenses associated with undergraduate and master's degrees and other educator licensure support programs.
- The MTA is also requesting emergency aid for two-years of debt-free college for Pell eligible students. Massachusetts community colleges and state universities enroll most lower-income residents in the state, who are seeking a college degree or certificate. During the pandemic, overall community college enrollment has declined by %15, while enrollment at the state universities declined at 14%. This has had a major impact on low-income students but has an acute impact on Black and Latino students. The next ARPA bill should focus resources on expanding enrollment of low-income students by providing a \$335 million program for the FY23 cost of two-years of debt-free college for Pell eligible students.
- Lastly, the MTA is requesting continued investment in public school and college campus building renovations. Currently our state's public colleges and universities identified over \$1.4 billion in urgent needed renovation investments.

Update On Priority Legislation

Several MTA priorities received reports of "ought to pass" and will now move on to the next step in the legislative process that will likely include a review by a second committee. These bills include An Act to provide fair working conditions for public higher education adjunct faculty and An Act relative to a state minimum wage for municipal employees.

- The Cherish Act – along with the debt-free act were sent to be considered by a taskforce on public college affordability. Unfortunately, there is no union representation on this taskforce
- S.1732/H.2723 - An Act to provide fair working conditions for public higher education adjunct faculty; Reported Favorably by the Joint Committee on Public Service on 2/2/2022S.
- 1733/H.2724 - An Act to ensure fair public higher education workplaces; Received an Extension until March 12, 2022
- S.829/H.1339 - An Act to guarantee debt-free public higher education - along with the Cherish act, was sent to be considered by a taskforce on public college affordability. Unfortunately, there is no union representation on this taskforce.
- S.1839/H.2969 - An Act relative to restoring corporate tax rates; Received an Extension Until May 4, 2022
- S.1812/H.2826 - An Act to close corporate tax loopholes and create progressive revenue; Received an Extension until 5/4/2022

Fair Share Amendment

MTA is working tirelessly on efforts to ensure the victory of the Fair Share Amendment in November. This would raise significant revenues earmarked for public education and transportation. They have voted to allocate \$10 million to use in this fight.

MTA Summer Organizers

The MTA will be hiring a significant number of summer organizers. Some of these will be hired for local member outreach and a large number will be hired for work on the Fair Share Amendment. This is particularly a great opportunity for PT members. The information on applying can be found here:

[Recruitment \(adp.com\)](#)