



State Universities
of Massachusetts

CoP Remarks on Behalf of the State University System to the Board of Higher Education

October 18, 2022

Delivered by Council of Presidents Chair, President Keenan (Salem State University)

Fair Share

As you know, the November ballot includes a proposed amendment to the state constitution to increase the tax rate by 4 percent on taxable income above \$1 million. Today, the Council of Presidents would like to go on record in full support of Question 1, the Fair Share amendment, which is aimed at significantly increasing available resources for transportation and education.

Question one is estimated to bring upwards of \$2 billion in additional tax revenue each year to support public education and transportation. If approved, the state universities are prepared to advocate for our “fair share” of these funds by demonstrating how our institutions’ investments will align with student and state needs and how these priorities will be addressed with additional funding.

Over the last two decades, state appropriations for public higher education have either fallen or remained stagnant. After adjusting for inflation, state spending on public higher education has not been restored to 2001 levels. This reduction in state support for public higher education, coupled with the lack of state funding to cover the full cost of labor contracts, fringe benefits, and deferred maintenance on state owned buildings, has resulted in a cost shift from the Commonwealth to our students and families, which has led to an increase in student fees and student loan debt. Having served a decade in the House, I know how difficult these decisions are. Passage of Fair Share will provide resources needed to achieve necessary increased funding.

My colleagues and I remain concerned that continued inadequate levels of funding for public higher education risks our ability to serve our communities of need. We believe that this chronic underfunding not only risks our mission, but also threatens the strength of our Massachusetts’ economy and limits the students we are meant to serve most; precisely those targeted in the DHE’s strategic plan.