



**Remarks to the Board of Higher Education
October 18, 2022
Maria Hegbloom, MSCA President**

Chair Gabrieli, board members, thank you for this opportunity to speak to you today. My name is Maria Hegbloom and I am the president of the Massachusetts State College Association representing faculty and librarians across the nine state universities.

As the statutory body charged with maintaining the system of public higher education in our state, I know that you all have spent many hours discussing the needs of our institutions, the challenges, and the problems we face. But as faculty and librarians, along with staff and students, my members live these needs, challenges, and problems every day.

Everyday my members walk onto their campuses, many into unhealthy buildings, with poor ventilation and crumbling infrastructure, some of these not even accessible to their students with disabilities. Everyday my members watch students leave our institutions because the costs have become unbearable or they are unable to get other support that they need. And too many of those who leave, whether through graduation or otherwise, do so with a mountain of debt they must climb before they can even begin to reach the middle-class life they are aiming for. Everyday my members take on the burden of an ever-increasing workload as they support students through the educational challenges brought on by successive covid years and expanding student mental health issues that are quickly reshaping the teaching and learning environment. This is all while faculty and librarians face their own anxieties as rising costs and inflation mean that their already meager salaries, well under those of peer institutions, have seen only miniscule adjustments over the past several years.

It is great that this board advocated for increased funding to the MassGrant Plus program and that our state responded with a budget better able to support students most in need. But this does nothing to address the needs of our universities: of innovative programming, student supports, or fair and equitable compensation. And while this board has also pushed for grants and other one-time funding on our campuses – to address wrap-around student supports or equity and retention – too often these one-time funds dry up as soon as a program has just started to pay off.

What our universities need is a consistent and reliable increase of funding, one that could be provided through the passage of the Fair Share Amendment, Ballot Question 1, this upcoming November. As the people on the ground making our system of public education actually run, we know, as do our campus presidents, how significant the Fair Share Amendment is and what a difference it could make for our public colleges and universities across the Commonwealth. As the board charged with maintaining the health of our system, we ask you to join with faculty and librarians across the state, with university presidents, and students to publicly support this important opportunity and encourage a Yes vote on question 1.