



Massachusetts Board of Higher Education Community College President's Report

Delivered by David Podell, President, MassBay Community College
Chair, Council of Community College Presidents

February 14, 2023

Good morning Chair Gabrieli, Commissioner Ortega, members of the Board – and a special welcome to Secretary Tutwiler on the occasion of your first Board of Higher Education meeting.

Secretary, on behalf of the Presidents of the Commonwealth's 15 community colleges which serve the largest number of students of the three segments, thank you for the work you have already done to advance equity for students – we look forward to working closely together with you, Governor Healey, and Lt. Governor Driscoll to build upon that work statewide.

Regarding today's agenda:

First, we are pleased to see the formula funding allocations before you today. This formula, based in small part on enrollment and large part on performance, is vital to the base operation of our colleges and is the mechanism for distributing our only new base dollars. The formula does need revisiting at some point soon, and we look forward to doing so in collaboration with the Board and Department.

Second, we offer our full support of the FY24 budget recommendations before you today. As you all know, the particular focus on the funding and financing of public higher education in Massachusetts has represented many, many months of work across the system and across your Board; we are excited for the next steps and grateful for the collaboration that has gotten us to this point.

We support the full set of recommendations before you. I take this opportunity to bring to your attention three elements that would make a significant impact at our colleges, including:

1. **Funding for students' living expenses.** We know, especially at the community colleges, that the costs above and beyond tuition and fees can be a barrier to entry, persistence, and completion. We are pleased to see proposed funding for student cost of living.
2. **Support for collective bargaining costs.**
3. **An increase in Dual Enrollment and Early College funding.** Early College addresses three critical issues: (1) college affordability and success, (2) racial and economic equity, and (3) workforce development. We support an increase from \$19 million to \$27.6 million across the two Early College line items, specifically, increasing the Dual Enrollment Grant and Subsidies (CDEP) line item from \$9 million to \$12.6 million and increasing the Early College Programs line item from \$10 million to \$15 million.

In addition, there are two other items that I want to specifically highlight:

- **We wholeheartedly support an increase to the SUCCESS line item, from \$14 million to \$18 million.** We are three years into the SUCCESS program, which was created to strengthen and bring to scale proven models for wraparound supports and services that improve outcomes for students facing systemic barriers. We are encouraged and excited by the program's results. We look forward to the upcoming release of our 2021–2022 SUCCESS report, which outlines the impressive results we are seeing from this program.
- Finally, **we offer our full support for MassReconnect**, which funds free community college for students 25 and older without a college degree. Our community colleges are workforce drivers, and we are grateful that Governor Healey has recognized the impact that MassReconnect would have on the Commonwealth. We recognize that additional conversations are underway about funding free community colleges for all. While we believe that MassReconnect is the right first step, we are committed to working with legislative leadership to ensure any broader proposal is structured in a way that makes community college more accessible and more affordable while ensuring sustained and consistent support for the colleges.

An additional consideration that we will be advocating for in the upcoming budget cycle is the continuation of the Education and Training Fund. Initially funded through ARPA legislation, the Education and Training Fund, or ETF, supports high-demand, no-cost workforce training programs at our community colleges that align with regional labor market blueprints. Fields include healthcare, education, manufacturing, information technology, cybersecurity, among others. ETF aims to train or upskill a total of 1,500 students within the first funding round. This fiscal year, we are advocating to add the ETF as a separate line item at \$15 million so that we can continue this work.

Within these conversations, we continue to advocate, as we have in the past, for a methodology that recognizes headcount in the computation of enrollment to account for the large number of students whose financial and life situations require them to enroll part-time.

Once again, on behalf of the 15 community colleges, we offer our support for the Department's FY24 budget recommendations, and look forward to continuing discussion around the best ways to advance opportunity for our students.