



The Massachusetts Chapter

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Representative Tom Sannicandro, House Chairman
Joint Committee on Higher Education
State House
Boston, MA 02133

February 10, 2014

Re: H.1078, An Act Regarding Tuition Equity for High School Graduates in the Commonwealth

Dear Representative Sannicandro,

I write on behalf of the Massachusetts Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics (MCAAP) which represents approximately 1,800 pediatricians across the Commonwealth. The members of the MCAAP are physicians dedicated to improving the quality of life for children by providing quality health care and advocating for them and their families. The MCAAP is committed to the attainment of optimal physical, mental and social health for all infants, children, adolescents, and young adults.

The Massachusetts Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics supports H. 1078, which would allow undocumented students who have attended a Massachusetts high school for at least three years and graduated to be eligible for in-state tuition at our public colleges and universities.

ISSUE:

Every year, hundreds of Massachusetts high school students are unable to get a college education because they are barred from attending our public colleges and universities at the same tuition rate as their high school classmates. Currently, students without permanent residency must pay out-of-state tuition, even though they have lived here for years and graduated from high schools in our communities. This out-of-state rate is three to five times the cost, making it practically impossible for low-income students to attend college. These students have lived in our communities most of their lives and could be our future doctors, teachers and engineers.

PROPOSAL:

H. 1078 would allow students who have attended a Massachusetts high school for three years and have graduated or received the equivalent of a diploma to pay the same in-state tuition rates at public colleges and universities as their peers. If a student is not a legal permanent resident, they must sign an affidavit stating that they have filed an application to become a legal permanent resident, or will file an application as soon as they are eligible. It would not provide free tuition, financial aid, scholarships or loans.

- **Strengthening Our Economic Future.** The educational opportunity this bill provides for high school students will allow them to contribute to their communities and strengthen the local economy. In Massachusetts, our economy is built upon our educated workforce. These students can be part of building Massachusetts's future economic success if they can get the same affordable education available to their high school classmates.
- **Adding to the State's Bottom Line.** This bill asks students to pay the same as everybody else, which makes sense for the state's bottom line. In fact, the Massachusetts Taxpayers Foundation estimates that, once fully phased in, the bill could generate an additional \$7.4 million a year for our higher education system. The twelve other states that have implemented similar legislation saw no additional costs; in fact, the legislation brought in millions of additional dollars in tuition revenue because of increased enrollment. Simply put, this legislation makes dollars and cents for our public colleges and universities.

Most of the undocumented students who would benefit from the bill were small children when their families made the decision to come to the U.S. This bill gives these students an even break, and it rewards the state with instant revenue and our economy with newly educated professionals. Punishing the kids for the choices of their parents does not economically hurt the parents, but it does hurt the educational potential of innocent children and the economic growth of Massachusetts.

This legislation would not impact U.S. citizen student's ability to get into a state college or university. All students, regardless of status, have the right to be admitted to public colleges by federal law. Passage of Education Opportunity legislation would bring between 300-600 undocumented students into the state college system, so it would increase competition minimally, if at all. In total, the eligible applicants represent less than one half of one percent of enrollment in the 29 public colleges in Massachusetts, according to 2006-2007 figures.

Education opportunity legislation cuts across partisan and ideological divides. States as politically diverse as Texas, Utah, Kansas, Connecticut, and California offer in-state tuition because they recognize its immediate and long-term benefits for their economies. We compete with these states for jobs and businesses. Every year we deny our students the opportunity to attend college we shrink our talent pool and undercut our economic advantage.

The Massachusetts Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics would urge the Higher education Committee to report H.1078 favorably.

Respectfully



John O'Reilly
President, the Massachusetts Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics