



August 7, 2019

Dear Senate President Spilka, Speaker DeLeo, Chair Gobi, and Chair Roy,

As Presidents of the Commonwealth's community colleges and state universities, we are collectively writing to thank you for your consideration of Senate Bill 741 and House Bill 1214, *An Act committing to higher education the resources to insure a strong and healthy public higher education system*. The bill, commonly known as the "CHERISH Act," focuses on addressing the need for a substantial and deliberate investment in Massachusetts public higher education.

The funding reflected in the proposal would put us on a path toward a generational reinvestment in public higher education while easing the cost burden to our students and families. Though the legislation's request is substantial, the necessity for significant reinvestment in our public institutions of higher education cannot be understated.

Our campuses play important and vital roles across the Commonwealth — educating citizens to be active participants in our democracy, preparing workers for the jobs of today and the future, and advancing research to benefit the Massachusetts economy and improve lives around the world — all the while enriching the cultural vitality of our cities and towns.

Many of us have spent many years working tirelessly to provide high-quality and affordable public higher education within a context of declining state funding. As the Massachusetts Budget and Policy Center has demonstrated, per-student funding for public higher education has dropped by nearly a third over the past two decades. Each day, we all confront the painful impacts: a rising cost of attendance that forces out students unable to afford it, delaying completion for students who must increase work hours to support themselves and their families, and graduates with burdensome debt.

We know that you sympathize and work under the constraints of insufficient state resources. Therefore, we are encouraged that legislators are contemplating additional revenue measures during the 191st General Court to address this issue.

As Horace Mann wrote 173 years ago, Massachusetts cannot rely on the presence of gold and silver mines for its wealth. We have long had to rely on the education of our people as the cornerstone of our economic and social health and public higher education graduates will always

be the core of the Commonwealth's workforce. That is why the Massachusetts Constitution specifically speaks of the need to "cherish" public education – both public schools *and* our institutions of higher learning.

We have joined together to speak with a united voice because of the magnitude of this issue and the critical need for reinvestment. We thank you for your consideration and we look forward to working with you on this opportunity to cherish our public institutions, our communities, and our students.

Sincerely,



President Ellen L. Kennedy
Berkshire Community College



President Laura L. Douglas
Bristol Community College



President Pam Eddinger
Bunker Hill Community College



President John L. Cox
Cape Cod Community College



President Yves Salomon-Fernández
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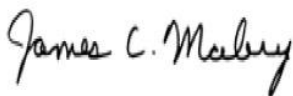
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MassBay Community College



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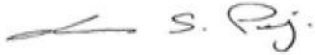
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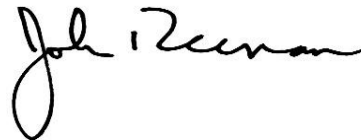
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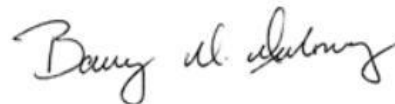
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