The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PRESENTED BY:

Joanne M. Comerford

To the Honorable Senate and House of Representatives of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in General Court assembled:

The undersigned legislators and/or citizens respectfully petition for the adoption of the accompanying bill:

An Act responding to the COVID-19 emergency by instituting a moratorium of the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System.

PETITION OF:

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<th>NAME</th>
<th>DISTRICT/ADDRESS</th>
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<tr>
<td>Joanne M. Comerford</td>
<td>Hampshire, Franklin and Worcester</td>
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An Act responding to the COVID-19 emergency by instituting a moratorium of the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System.

Whereas, The deferred operation of this act would tend to defeat its purpose, which is to establish forthwith a moratorium on the administration of the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System and for associated graduation requirements and accountability measures, in response to the COVID-19 emergency, therefore it is hereby declared to be an emergency law, necessary for the immediate preservation of the public convenience.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:

SECTION 1. Chapter 69 of the General Laws, as appearing in the 2018 Official Edition, is hereby amended by adding the following section:-

Section 37. (a) Notwithstanding subsection (i) of section 1D, for the school years beginning in the fall of 2020 through the school year ending in 2024, the requirement that a student must demonstrate mastery of a common core of skills, competencies and knowledge as measured by Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System or any other named statewide standardized assessment shall not be required as a condition for high school graduation.

(b) Notwithstanding the provisions of any general law, special law, regulation, or collective bargaining agreement to the contrary, the results from student learning measures that
inform the educator plan or self-assessment shall not be used, in whole or in part, in an
educator’s formative evaluation, formative assessment, or summative evaluation for the four
academic years from the effective date of this act.

(c) The department shall not implement or use the mandated state standardized
assessment to satisfy the accountability provisions of section 1J or section 1K, for the school
years beginning in the fall of 2020 through the school year ending in 2024.

SECTION 2. Notwithstanding any general or special law to the contrary, the
commissioner of elementary and secondary education shall submit to the United States
Department of Education a request that the Commonwealth’s statewide assessment,
accountability and reporting requirements under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act be
waived for the 2020-2024 school years. The request shall be made pursuant to section 8401 of
the Elementary and Secondary Education Act and shall include a request to waive the assessment
requirements in section 1111(b)(2); the accountability and school identification requirements in
sections 1111(c)(4) and 1111(d)(2)(C)-(D); and the report card provisions related to assessments
and accountability in section 1111(h).

SECTION 3. (a) There shall be a special commission on the school and district
evaluation system, assessment instruments, and requirements regarding underperforming schools
and school districts. The commission shall review the performance, efficacy and impact of the
state’s school and district evaluation system, including indicators, the framework and the process
used to evaluate school and district performance, including, but not limited to, district and school
goals, availability of programs, assessment instruments used to measure academic progress
indicators of social, emotional and physical health of students and staff, opportunities for
Members of the commission shall include the house and senate chairs of the joint committee on education or their designees, who shall serve as co-chairs; the secretary of education; the commissioner of elementary and secondary education; the commissioner of early education and care; the speaker of the house of representatives or a designee; the president of the senate or a designee; the minority leader of the house of representatives or a designee; the minority leader of the senate or a designee; and 1 member to be appointed by each of the following organizations: the Massachusetts Association of School Committees, Inc.; the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents, Inc.; the Massachusetts Teachers Association; the American Federation of Teachers Massachusetts; the Massachusetts Association of Vocational Administrators, Inc.; the Massachusetts Association of Regional Schools, Inc.; The Massachusetts Parent Teacher Association, New England Area Conference (NEAC) of the NAACP; La Communidad; Chelsea Collaborative; Muslim Justice League; the Massachusetts State Student Advisory Council to the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education; and a person with academic expertise in the intersection of public health and education to be appointed by the co-chairs. The commissioner of elementary and secondary education shall furnish reasonable staff and other support for the work of the commission, including administration of the grant program established in subsection (b). Prior to issuing its recommendations, the commission shall conduct not fewer than 4 public hearings across regions of the commonwealth, and shall review reports, and recommendations from the school district task forces created in subsection (c). The special commission shall make recommendations, including proposed amendments to sections 1I, 1J and 1K of chapter 69 of the General Laws. The special
commission shall file its recommendations, together with drafts of legislation necessary to carry those recommendations into effect, with the clerks of the senate and house of representatives on or before December 31, 2022.

(b) The commission shall create a grant program within 90 days of the enactment of this act to support the establishment of district task forces to develop and pilot school and district evaluation models. The purpose of the grant program is to enable educators, students, parents and local districts to establish a vision and goals for their public schools; to determine how best to evaluate whether or not their vision and goals are being met; and to identify what resources are needed to realize those goals. The further purpose of the grant program is to provide the commission established with locally informed, practical information and feedback to inform its work, findings and recommendations. The commission shall approve all grant decisions related to the program, which shall be administered by the department of elementary and secondary education. Grants to school districts, not to exceed $15,000, shall be funded from the 21st Century Education Trust Fund.

(c) A school district task force on assessment shall be formed at the local level in no more than 25 public-school districts. The participating school districts shall include districts from each region of the state and include regional school districts, economically disadvantaged school districts as defined in section 3A of chapter 23A of the General Laws and school districts with a significant population of English language learners as defined in subsection (d) of section 2 of chapter 71A of the General Laws.

Each task force shall be co-chaired by the chair of the school committee, or the chair’s designee, and the president of the authorized collective bargaining agent representing licensed
educators, or the president’s designee. In addition to the co-chairs, the task force composition
shall consist of no more than nine members of the community, parents, school staff including
administrators and educators, and students as appropriate. The task forces may convene within
30 days of notification by the department that a grant has been awarded to the district.

Each task force shall annually report on its progress to the department of elementary and
secondary education, which shall furnish the reports to the commission.

(d) The department of elementary and secondary education shall submit a preliminary
report on the status of the grant program, progress of applicants and assess the need for increased
funding after the initial application cycle to the commission to inform its work and
recommendations.