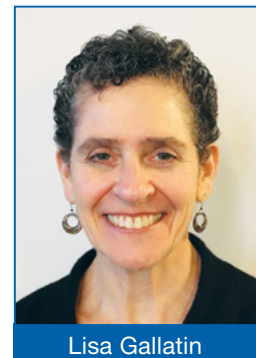


ANNUAL REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR-TREASURER

This report is bookended by the pandemic. How could it be otherwise? Last year, we pivoted overnight in countless ways, including preparing to hold a virtual annual meeting. At that time I wrote:

“As of the printing of this annual report, we suddenly find ourselves at the height of a global pandemic that is turning our country and the world on its head. The effects on each of our lives, our communities, the U.S. economy, and on our collective psyche are profound, and that includes the impact on our public schools and colleges.”

I certainly didn’t imagine then that one year later we would still be operating under the cloud of COVID-19 — and conducting another virtual Annual Meeting of Delegates. But this year, as difficult and at times painful as it has been, has also highlighted the resilience and creativity of our preK-12 and college public educators and the enduring power of collective action.



Lisa Gallatin

UNION SOLIDARITY AND ACTIVISM

The challenges we faced were unprecedented. It is by working in union that our locals and chapters have negotiated countless MOAs providing crucial health and safety protections for educators, students, and communities, as well as protections against excessive layoffs and furloughs. It is by working in union that we have been among the leading voices, in Massachusetts and nationally, in demanding help for those who are most vulnerable in the face of the economic hardships caused by pandemic disruptions.

We pressured the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, UMass, the state Board of Higher Education, the Legislature, and the governor to prioritize the health and well-being of students and educators and to prioritize educators for vaccination. Thousands of MTA members attended online membership meetings and town halls, hundreds planned standouts and masked rallies in their communities, and many dozens have served on committees that produced workshops, conferences, and resources. Our Environmental Health and Safety Committee met weekly to develop the MTA’s essential health and safety guidelines. Most recently many locals — along with our ALANA educators — have been advocating for MCAS opt-out campaigns.

And still the coronavirus couldn’t stop us. Last summer the MTA Board passed the ESP Bill of Rights, crafted by the MTA ESP Standards Task Force, which has now been adopted by dozens of locals. The MTA successfully lobbied for the cancellation of MCAS in 2020 and the elimination of the MCAS graduation requirement for the 2020-2022 graduating classes. We won funding for higher ed as well as financial aid, and the Legislature took significant steps to put the *Student Opportunity Act* back on track for full and timely implementation. As I write, we are advocating in both our locals and the Legislature for allocating *American Rescue Plan Act* funding in ways that will support the emotional well-being of students and address the inequities that intensified so sharply as a result of the pandemic. We are also fighting for the kind of state resources for public higher education that are called for by the *Cherish Act*.

Amid all of this activity, regional solidarity has mushroomed, with MTA education action networks and other coordinating bodies sharing resources and aligning efforts throughout the state. The division summaries in this report provide a further snapshot of the many ways in which MTA members and staff have risen to the challenge and kept our union strong while continuing to build our power at every level.

MEMBERSHIP

Amid the disruption brought on by COVID-19, maintaining membership cannot be taken for granted, whether it’s signing up every new hire or effective grassroots engagement and leadership development programs. The U.S. Supreme Court’s *Janus* decision looms as a continuing threat. The ongoing assaults funded by right-wing billionaires’ dark money are aimed at unraveling the very foundations of unionism. This past year the MTA took strategic action on the membership front, creating a new position called Member Data Strategist that is devoted to helping locals establish more robust systems for signup and retention. As our preK-12 educators return in greater numbers to in-person classrooms, that work continues with a spring and summer membership campaign — and both preK-12 and higher ed locals are already preparing for new-hire orientations and recruitment efforts.

BLUEPRINT IMPLEMENTATION

Last March, the MTA Board adopted the Blueprint Strategic Framework, a set of priorities to position our union for the challenges and opportunities ahead in a rapidly changing landscape. Despite all of the upheaval of the pandemic, this has been a year of groundbreaking accomplishments as the MTA launched Phase I of Blueprint implementation.

An extensive information-gathering process including member and staff surveys, along with 29 focus groups, established five strategic priorities in the Blueprint:

- Connect Members to the Life of the Union
- Cultivate and Support Leadership at All Levels of the Union
- Maximize Our Bargaining Power
- Advance Policy Solutions and Campaigns
- Lead on Economic, Social, and Racial Justice

A budget was then passed at the 2020 Annual Meeting with funds set aside to enable the MTA to begin investing in putting the Blueprint to work.

The first step toward implementing the Blueprint focused on the MTA's capacity to provide locals with the resources they need. A Labor Management Committee spent nearly six months in a thoughtful and creative process analyzing existing staff capacity and learning from our NEA partners in other states. A consensus proposal on a new field staff structure was endorsed by the Board last summer.

Now, the former Affiliate Services and Higher Education divisions have been merged into the new Field and Organizing Division. Sixteen new permanent staff positions were created, including an additional Field Representative-Organizer plus a Regional Organizer in each of our five regions; two additional Field Rep-Organizers to support higher ed; and a newly conceived team of three Bargaining Campaign and Strategy Specialists. (See the [Field and Organizing section](#) for more detail.) This new structure greatly enhances the MTA's ability to help our locals maximize their bargaining power, cultivate and support local leadership, and connect members to the life of the union.

With the newly created positions, the MTA has stayed busy hiring new staff to meet Blueprint needs. In addition, six new managers were hired during this pandemic year, largely due to retirements. It has not been easy for these employees to start their new jobs absent face-to-face relationships, but our dedicated staff, veteran and new, have risen to the occasion.

SOCIAL AND RACIAL JUSTICE

The continued killing of black and brown people at the hands of law enforcement has also defined this year — for the country as well as for our union. The Blueprint priority of leading on economic, social, and racial justice has taken on even greater urgency. Membership programming this past year included a live discussion at the 2020 Ethnic Minority Affairs Committee Conference with “How to Be an Antiracist” author Dr. Ibram X. Kendi, Courageous Conversation groups sponsored by locals, and book groups led by ALANA. On the staff side, the MTA conducted a series of staff listening circles after the murder of George Floyd and offered all staff an NEA workshop series on structural racism. Meanwhile, managers have been participating in their own series of Courageous Conversations. As we all know, the work requires a long-term commitment. Most recently, the MTA Board voted to enhance the MTA's Equal Employment Opportunity Officer position, and we will soon be recruiting to hire a Racial Justice, Diversity, and Inclusion Program Manager.

UNIONS ON THE RISE

Yes, we are exhausted and ready for the pandemic to end! We're also nearing the end of the school year with polls showing that educators — and educators' unions — continue to be held in high regard by the public. Even more broadly — and despite the disappointing defeat of the organizing effort at Amazon's Alabama warehouse following a multimillion-dollar anti-union campaign — support for unions continues to rise.

A HEARTFELT THANK YOU

Despite the fears and frustrations, our rank-and-file membership, our local leadership, our MTA leadership, and our MTA staff have all worked tirelessly. I want to take this opportunity to say THANK YOU. I hope all of you get to enjoy some much needed and much deserved time this summer to spend with your family and friends — and to help fortify us for the challenges ahead.

The following summaries cover the key activities of MTA divisions and departments in 2020-2021.

CENTER FOR EDUCATION POLICY AND PRACTICE

The focus of the center continues to be on influencing policy decisions that shape students' learning conditions and members' working conditions. But this year has been different. The issues are new, the volume of policy issues has increased, and the center has focused on making racial and social justice perspectives central to its analysis and advocacy.

The center's agenda has included:

Remote Learning/School Reopening/Post-Pandemic Education. CEPP staff navigated the issues associated with switching to remote instruction: the challenges of virtual learning, shifting CDC and DESE guidance, student learning time requirements, and the provision of special education services. Center staff are working with the MTA Education Policy and Practice Committee on reimagining more authentic and equitable public schools.

Funding. The *Student Opportunity Act* and the *Cherish Act* remain top priorities. CEPP staff researched and analyzed significant infusions of federal funds and provided materials to assist members and staff in advocating for allocations of these funds.

Standardized Testing. The merits of administering MCAS and ACCESS became significant issues as the state and federal governments determined whether these assessments would be required. CEPP staff monitored changing state and federal policies and assisted with developing legislative proposals to provide alternatives and materials for parents and students choosing not to participate in these tests.

Licensure Requirements. Pandemic staffing issues resulted in changes to educator licensure requirements. CEPP staff succeeded in getting beneficial provisions included in changes to regulations, such as those for emergency licensure. The emergency license has allowed the elimination of testing requirements that are a barrier to increasing the diversity of the educator workforce. The CEPP has also experienced an unprecedented demand from MTA members for licensure workshops, with almost 3,000 members registering for these programs by April. The staff continues to advise individual MTA members on educator licensure, handling about 400 cases in the past year.

Educator Diversity. CEPP staff assisted with the development of legislation that would reduce the barriers to diversity presented by the Massachusetts Tests for Educator Licensure.

Vocational Technical Education. Center staff represented the MTA in the Vocational Education Justice Coalition, advocating for changes to admissions policy that would eliminate discriminatory criteria that can exclude students of color, English learners and other groups of students.

Teacher Leadership Institute. The NEA has reduced its support for the TLI program, but the CEPP obtained a grant from the NEA that could be allocated to that program. More than 40 MTA members — constituting one of the largest cohorts since the program's inception — are participating in a modified six-month version of the TLI.

COMMUNICATIONS

The division continued to adapt forcefully and rapidly as the coronavirus pandemic worsened, even as the staff advanced the priorities of the MTA Blueprint.

Thanks in part to the division's outreach and advocacy, education union leaders have been in constant demand in recent months — sometimes seven days a week — for television, radio and newspaper interviews.

MTA President Merrie Najimy became a dominant presence in the media as the association stood up for students, educators, and health and safety in our schools and our public higher education system — all through the frame of racial and social justice. Her voice was consistently featured, locally and sometimes nationally, in opposition to the misguided priorities set forth by the governor and state education officials on reopening, vaccines, high-stakes testing, and other vital subjects. This messaging had a major impact on public perception and the course that was taken in school districts and on campuses.

Meanwhile, in concert with the division's extensive work with local associations and chapters, the staff provided assistance that was instrumental in advancing key Blueprint priorities. Communications — using organic and paid social media, [massteacher.org](https://www.massteacher.org), *MTA Today*, leadership messages and all other forms of outreach to members and the public — helped build union power and organizing strength, connect members to the life of the MTA, and lead on economic issues, social issues and racial justice issues.

The division's services were often tested to the limit in simultaneously helping members deal with COVID-19 issues, contract campaigns, public relations crises and other matters. The staff helped plan and cover important actions across the state, put out statements and publications filled with crucial information, and supported events such as the ESP Conference, the EMAC Conference and the Annual Meeting of Delegates.

Throughout the year, the division has also continued to highlight the many contributions of educators in all forms. It has advocated urgently for public education funding, kept up the fight for the MTA's legislative priorities, and worked closely with coalitions such as Raise Up Massachusetts.

As always, the staff has collaborated intensely with all other divisions. Coordinated organizational strategy has, among other things, helped the MTA fend off right-wing attacks and deal with the lasting implications of the U.S. Supreme Court's *Janus* decision.

The staff is always available to consult with local and state leaders and colleagues, and it has continued to provide top-notch writing, editing, graphic design and videography services. In addition, staff members work with numerous MTA committees and administer [The Massachusetts Child](https://www.masschild.org), an MTA charity.

The division is always innovating and changing as it finds new ways to increase members' power and keep up the fight for the public schools, colleges and universities that our students and communities deserve.

FIELD AND ORGANIZING

The new division is the result of combining the Affiliate Services and Higher Education divisions in order to emphasize the need for a preK-16 approach to the work of the association. The division remains committed to engaging members and assisting locals in promoting the success of educators at all levels. The division is further dedicated to organizing for power and helping members take on stronger leadership and activist roles as the MTA fights for the schools and campuses that Massachusetts students and communities deserve.

Field and Organizing staff support locals in building bargaining campaigns, the negotiation of more than 700 contracts, and representing and advancing the interests of members. This year, because of the pandemic, the staff worked with locals on an almost nonstop basis to bargain over health and safety issues, modes of instruction, paid time for COVID-19 lost days of work, and fight-back campaigns against layoffs and furloughs.

Division staff are active on MTA committees, including those focused on large locals, environmental health and safety (especially this year!), ESPs, ethnic minority affairs, and new members.

Blueprint Field Structure and Staffing and Bargaining Support. As part of implementing the Blueprint Project strategic priorities, there was a major expansion of division staff to provide even greater support to all locals and regions across the state. A new bargaining campaign strategy team was created, with three staff members who will focus on supporting locals in all sectors in best practices for bargaining campaigns as well as in model contract provisions. This team will also support field staff and bargaining committees to further democratize bargaining in multiple ways, including open bargaining, coordinated bargaining, and the development of bargaining councils. In addition, two field staff members were added to the higher ed team (for a total of nine higher ed field representative organizers) and the team was reorganized so that each higher ed sector (community colleges, state universities and UMass) is assigned three full-time dedicated field rep organizers. An additional field rep organizer was also added to each regional office team, resulting in eight field rep organizers in the Western, Central, Metro, Southeast and Northeast offices, respectively. A regional organizer was also added to those five regional offices to build and sustain regional networks and regional coordination across locals, as well as assist in key statewide, regional and local campaigns. Lastly, a data specialist was added to the division to provide greater support to local officers as well as to field staff.

Health and Safety. A major focus throughout this pandemic year has been advocating and organizing for the health and safety of members, students and our communities. The Return to Schools Safely campaign has included multiple workshops and webinars (in conjunction with the EH&S Committee and the Training and Professional Learning Division), local and regional meetings, and negotiations over all of the elements of a safe return to classrooms and campuses. Locals across the state have engaged in more actions than ever. This includes many rallies, caravans, and creative job actions (in communities such as Andover and Brookline) demanding safety, funding and fairness.

HIGHER EDUCATION

Now part of the Field and Organizing Division, the higher education team is committed to building rank-and-file power on community college, state university and University of Massachusetts campuses. Staff members work with local chapters on contract negotiation and enforcement, issue organizing, leadership development, strategy and advocacy. The following have been key areas of the team's work over the past year.

Fund Our Future. The higher ed team took the lead in coordinating *Cherish Act* campaign activities to reverse 20 years of disinvestment in public higher education. A member working group framed principles for adequate and equitable funding. A successful Public Higher Education Advocacy Day was held the week before the pandemic shut down the State House. Ongoing goals for 2021 include winning economic gains and health care coverage, reversing staff cuts and the privatization and "adjunctification" of jobs, reinvesting in infrastructure and ensuring affordability for students.

Contract Action and Issue Organizing. All locals were in contract bargaining in 2020, with most agreements expiring on June 30. Locals were engaged in bargaining memorandums of understanding for health and safety provisions, remote-work language, and more. Organizing to stop job cuts, furloughs and layoffs or to bargain COVID-19 impacts drove leaders to come together for a summer of escalating campaign actions to fight austerity. Creative organizing, such as a legislative town hall (exceeding the Zoom license of 1,000), livestreamed car caravans, and safely distanced direct action engaged more member participation than most locals and chapters had ever experienced. Locals carried out contract campaigns that were highly democratized. A social media campaign targeted 144 "higher ed executives," from chancellors and presidents to trustees on college boards. Research on finances and corporate ties exposed trustee ties to the charter school industry, venture capitalism and businesses with interlocking investment and real estate interests. Programs shut down at Springfield Technical Community College were restored by chapter action, with visible community support. At the end of the fall, the higher ed team fought for and won level funding by the Legislature, and then campaigned to overturn the governor's veto. The UMass Unions United coalition called together 20 unions to build activism on each campus, with a statewide leadership team of 65 who meet weekly. The coalition engaged in multiunion bargaining on paid family and medical leave, health and safety, and fighting staff cuts. Support for laid-off or furloughed members included fundraising, assistance with unemployment, and solidarity networking. As successor bargaining resumes with the Board of Higher Education, unions are meeting together to discuss strategy. Leaders are discussing coordinated bargaining, strategies to deal with the governor's "parameters" that restrict economic bargaining, and model contract language. Locals joined in actions on Black Lives Matter and climate change, and they worked with community groups dealing with COVID-19 issues. Advocacy efforts and workshops on unemployment, health care, health and safety, antiracism, student debt and media activism attracted hundreds of members.

Membership Strength. An intense focus on outreach to new employees and rapid responses to antiunion activities has been a priority, though the pandemic has posed challenges. In the spring, 25 volunteers made 1,500 outreach calls to members about health care needs and asked nonmembers to join. Twenty summer member organizers reached out via video, phone and email to nonmembers, primarily adjuncts. Member recruitment remains a critical focus throughout 2021.

FINANCE AND ACCOUNTING

The MTA's financial condition continues to be strong. Our June 30, 2020, audited financial statements show total net assets of \$20.2 million. The MTA's cash and liquid reserves remain healthy, resulting from years of positive financial results, prudent pension funding, positive investment performance and sound fiscal management.

To date, the U.S. Supreme Court's 2018 *Janus* decision has not adversely affected the MTA's financial condition. In the current fiscal year, however, our membership has been adversely affected by the pandemic to some degree. MTA leadership is advancing a 2021-2022 budget with projected membership at the 2020-2021 budget levels, assuming that those losses are short term and will be recouped next year. Any potential increase in school funding statewide is expected to provide offsetting membership growth in the years ahead.

The division consistently provides outstanding service in the following areas:

- Membership processing for more than 115,000 members.
- Robust financial training and assistance to local associations, informing them of best financial practices and assisting with compliance issues.
- Internal accounting services, including financial reporting, budgeting, expense reporting, financial analysis, payroll, 401(k) and pension accounting, internal controls, accounting for other MTA entities, required annual tax filings for the IRS and other entities, financial support for MTA governance and committees, purchasing and travel administration.

GOVERNANCE AND ADMINISTRATION

The division managed all Governance-related meetings and events, including the Annual Meeting of Delegates, Executive Committee and Board of Directors' meetings, All Presidents' and Regional Presidents' meetings, and local and regional member forums. The division also coordinates and manages the Massachusetts delegation's attendance at the NEA Representative Assembly.

The division provides day-to-day assistance to MTA officers, the Executive Committee, the Board, member committees and local association leaders.

Key activities during the past year have included:

- Shifting the MTA Annual Meeting of Delegates to a virtual format at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020.
- Pivoting all Governance meetings and events to a virtual format for 2020-2021 and creating a virtual process that enabled Governance business to move forward during the pandemic.
- Shifting with the NEA when the NEA Representative Assembly was switched to a virtual format in 2020 and providing information for all MTA delegates, who were required to participate in a new way.
- Providing administrative support in the appointment of MTA committees and serving as staff liaison to several committees and task forces.
- Preparing budget proposals for the division's operations and for MTA committees.
- Dedicating support staff to MTA leadership for work on all MTA campaigns.

GOVERNMENT RELATIONS

The division works to strengthen the voices of MTA members in the political and legislative processes by linking educators with their elected officials on Beacon Hill.

As with every other aspect of our lives, the pandemic disrupted the legislative and state budget processes at the State House. The division responded by closely tracking issues that are important to members, understanding how the pandemic altered the legislative process, and then organizing across divisions and with members to ensure that the views and priorities of educators were heard.

Over the past year, the MTA achieved several significant legislative victories, including successfully lobbying for the cancellation of the administration of the MCAS in 2020 and elimination of the MCAS graduation requirement for the 2020-2022 graduating classes. Despite great economic uncertainty, educators won an increase in funding for financial aid and the operating budgets for the state's community colleges and state universities.

State legislative leaders advocated forcefully to prioritize the vaccination of educators to support the safe return to in-person learning and for COVID-19-related emergency paid leave for all municipal workers to provide essential support. Finally, the Legislature took significant steps to put the *Student Opportunity Act* back on track for full implementation by FY2027 — despite a one-year delay due to the pandemic.

In addition, the division was active in state and federal elections. In collaboration with the MTA Candidate Recommendation Committee, the division organized interviews with candidates in a number of races and advocated for recommended candidates.

As the legislative session continues, the division will advocate strongly for passage of elements of the MTA's legislative agenda. They include full funding of the *Student Opportunity Act*, increased funding for our public higher education campuses called for in the *Cherish Act*, and educational priorities and convictions deeply held by educators, such as further cancellation of the MCAS.

GRASSROOTS CAMPAIGNS

The mission of the division is supporting public education and making educators' voices heard. The staff does this through the power of the MTA membership and the activism of members who take on leadership roles across Massachusetts.

These member leaders establish, maintain and focus on expanding regional Legislative and Political Action Teams throughout the state. LPATs organize educators and public education supporters via ongoing campaigns, elections and organizing initiatives.

Through this process, educators influence public education policy, increase community engagement around education issues, and work with coalitions and other partners on important initiatives related to public education.

In the past year, this process has helped secure major victories in federal and statewide elections, in the state Legislature with MCAS/remote learning and other school safety issues, and by building MTA's organizing capacity across the state.

Educators made more than 150,000 calls for statewide and federal elections — helping win back the White House and elect pro-public-education candidates to the U.S. Senate and the Legislature. More than 10,000 individual MTA members took on a volunteer activity or shift for an electoral campaign. Over 3,000 members attended in-district legislative meetings, procuring victories on MCAS and school safety issues while significantly moving the ball on funding and other important issues.

The division is currently focused on expanding and growing teams while working on a campaign in support of MTA's legislative agenda. The staff will be working on fully funded safe and diverse schools, higher education, and dignity for public employees and educators at all stages of their careers. Grassroots continues to bring in new members

and stay connected to local associations and chapters through the Political Action Leader program, which is made up of a diverse group of educators, from prekindergarten through college. The division is also laying the groundwork for statewide electoral campaigns in 2021-2022 to increase funding for public education and to support pro-public-education candidates at every level of government.

The campaign for public education never ends, but it is rewarding. Grassroots staff look forward to continuing the fight throughout the coming year.

HUMAN RESOURCES

The division had a busy year meeting the operational needs of the MTA in the areas of new employee recruitment and onboarding, benefits administration and employee relations. As the staffing needs of the MTA change, the division itself is growing, with new staff members being added.

Highlights of the past year included:

- Hiring 129 MTA Summer Member Organizers and 19 new staff members. Twenty staff members were promoted or moved into new full-time roles, and five staff members announced their retirements.
- Working with NEA staff member Ellen Holmes to provide ongoing training and development in our diversity, inclusion and racial justice initiatives.
- Continuing to develop Joint Labor Management and Board committees to better serve the needs of the organization, with an ongoing commitment to promoting inclusion to advance the goals of the union.
- Updating the division's intranet presence to provide transparency and make information about contracts, benefits and other matters easily obtainable to staff.
- Expanding sourcing strategy to increase the diversity pool of job candidates and ensure a stronger, more robust pipeline.
- Beginning the process of revising the onboarding/new-hire orientation to welcome staff and help them better understand the organization and processes within MTA. This is being done with input from the Super JLMC and survey results.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SERVICES

The division has continued to provide and support systems that help the organization implement up-to-date strategic planning, as well as to meet the day-to-day technological needs of the staff.

The division was easily able to meet the needs of the organization's transition to remote work as a result of the pandemic due to the systems and upgrades that have been put in place over the past several years.

We continue to work with other divisions to help automate workflows through the use of Office 365. A notable project this past year was the automation of the Chapter 150e filings by locals.

The division works in collaboration with all other MTA divisions to ensure that technological needs are being met and that the association is using its internal resources to the greatest extent possible. The division is also responsible for the implementation, support and maintenance of all major computer applications, as well as more than 175 laptop and desktop computers, printers, servers and internal and cellular telephone systems.

The work of the division makes possible the smooth operation of the technology systems that are woven through all parts of the organization and essential to ensuring maximum efficiency and productivity.

LEGAL SERVICES

The division continues to be a formidable and well-respected presence in the labor and education communities. It is widely recognized for high-quality legal representation, robust advocacy and strong commitment to protecting the workplace rights and secured benefits of educators across the MTA membership.

The division represents individual members and local/statewide affiliates on a wide range of labor, employment and union-related issues, including terminations, suspensions, licensure investigations, unemployment claims, retirement appeals, civil service issues, unlawful discrimination matters, wage claims, workers' compensation, whistleblower retaliation, work-related criminal charges, unfair labor practices, contract arbitrations, local corporate matters, health insurance disputes, DFR allegations and new member organizing.

The division represents educators from all types of bargaining units, from preK-12 through higher education. The division also includes the MTA's retirement consultation program. Retirement consultants meet with hundreds of members across the state on a one-to-one basis and in workshops, reaching more and more members every year.

MTA attorneys — both in-house lawyers and outside counsel — litigate before the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court, the Appeals Court, the Superior Court, arbitrators, the Department of Labor Relations, the Division of Administrative Law Appeals, the Massachusetts Teachers' Retirement Board, and other legal forums. The division intervenes in or files amicus briefs in the appellate courts on cases of statewide significance. In addition, MTA attorneys help interpret and draft the MTA's public comments on numerous regulatory amendments by various state agencies.

Despite a substantial increase of cases, especially on issues that arose sharply due to the pandemic, such as unemployment benefits and MCAD claims related to ADA accommodations, MTA attorneys diligently shifted gears to support the field and help other divisions address the numerous needs of the membership in an uncertain and fast-changing landscape. Most recently, the division assisted with the interpretation of several emergency regulations promulgated by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to address structured learning time for remote, hybrid and in-person instruction during a pandemic. These regulatory changes made it necessary that local affiliates negotiate novel and unprecedented contract provisions to protect the emotional, mental and physical health and safety of members and their students. Accordingly, MTA attorneys provided guidance and legal research at bargaining tables, enforced MOAs on contract violations or repudiations, and advised on legislation and protected concerted activities aimed at safeguarding the social welfare of students and educators.

MTA BENEFITS

MTA Benefits responded to changing member priorities brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. MTAB saw an unprecedented volume of inquiries about life and disability insurance, will and estate planning, and student loan debt repayment options. MTAB was fortunate in securing an all-member disability open enrollment period in 2021 to help those desperately seeking financial security.

As Zoom meetings proliferated, MTAB reached hundreds more members than usual by offering webinars on a variety of topics, including student loan debt, elder care and estate planning.

Several new programs were launched, providing members with more choices than ever. Liberty Mutual began offering members auto and home insurance, pet insurance, and workers' compensation for local associations. SecurusID joined MTAB's identity theft services providers. NEA Member Benefits' Student Debt Navigator and College Ave student loan programs are now offered alongside MTAB's popular Cambridge Credit Counseling services and Citizens Bank student loan options. Finally, MTAB is the first state affiliate to offer the Access® Cash Back hotel platform. Access is among the largest travel wholesalers in the world. When members are ready to resume travel, they will find unmatched savings at more than 900,000 properties worldwide.

MTAB's flagship savings program, the *Benefits & Discount Directory*, was not published for the first time in more than 30 years. While discounts were not at the top of members' minds as businesses across the state were shuttered, MTAB's extensive benefit programs provided solutions that were urgently needed in the changing environment.

PRINTING AND MAILING

The department fulfilled 614 job requests during calendar year 2020 to meet print requests from all MTA divisions, locals, coalition partners and other outside clients. Many of these requests were for various local associations, involving the printing of materials such as contracts, flyers, newsletters and postcards. We continue to see an uptick in the use of the wide-format printer for banners, large posters and signs.

When our copier and machine leases expired last spring, we were able to replace them with new equipment with new features. We are now able to produce the New Teacher Planner piece of the membership materials package in-house and offer contour-cut decals, outdoor banners, and floor and wall graphics.

The staff has continued to scan archived MTA documents. This work includes creating structured, searchable PDFs.

The department continues to coordinate with all MTA divisions to keep the membership informed.

TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

The division transitioned all workshops and conferences to an online platform in the past year. This training adaptation grew participation far in excess of onsite conferences, workshops and events in previous years. TPL's digital footprint increased accessibility and connected new members to their local associations and to the MTA.

The virtual Summer Conference had more than 6,000 members in attendance at workshops, and event attendance during the fall, winter and spring exceeded previous years' onsite registrations. The pandemic heightened the importance and the vital role of educators in creating accessible and equitable learning environments for all students. TPL's ability to identify virtual platforms to deliver robust programming laid the groundwork for a post-pandemic learning community that will include online, onsite and hybrid engagement.

In addition to traditional professional development, union skills and leadership programs, the virtual platform provided opportunities to deliver unique programs such as town halls, statewide forums and member-led book discussions. The 2020 Ethnic Minority Affairs Conference broke member turnout records. It featured a live discussion with author and scholar Dr. Ibram X. Kendi, who spoke about racism, public education and the theme of his book "How to Be an Antiracist." The virtual Winter Union Skills Workshop Series featured a conversation with authors Dr. Jack Schneider and Dr. Jennifer Berkshire regarding their book, "A Wolf at the Schoolhouse Door." New programming addressing the MTA Blueprint included *Educator Anti-Racism Roundtable* dialogues, a *Family, Educator and Community* workshop series, and *Courageous Conversations* for MTA staff, locals and members. To address educators' stress amid the pandemic, holistic *Self-Care for the Caregiver* programming was expanded to include classroom instruction for trauma-sensitive learning environments and student wellness.

Division staff continue to review and assess current software platforms to align, consolidate and increase technology efficiency. The future of professional development lies in creating a robust online presence. This will require the division to expand the range of virtual resources. As part of enhancing TPL's online footprint, a redesigned webpage, a robust weekly newsletter called the *Monday Minute*, and social media have increased member engagement and learning opportunities.