



City of Northampton

MASSACHUSETTS

*In the City Council,
October 17, 2024*

Upon the Recommendation of Councilors Deborah Klemer and Rachel Maiore

R-24.156 A RESOLUTION CALLING FOR PASSAGE OF QUESTION 2 TO REPLACE THE MCAS GRADUATION REQUIREMENT

WHEREAS, access to a high-quality, publicly funded education is a guaranteed right written into the Massachusetts Constitution; and

WHEREAS, the goal of public education is to teach students essential, foundational skills such as reading, writing and arithmetic, and to develop critical thinkers, engaged citizens and lifelong learners; and

WHEREAS, the bedrock of the Commonwealth's outstanding public education system is strong, statewide standards that are uniform throughout our public schools; and

WHEREAS, Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) is a set of statewide standardized tests that all public school students and that Massachusetts [State law](#) requires that high school students meet the [Competency Determination \(CD\) standard](#) in order to graduate, which requires a [passing score on MCAS tests](#); and

WHEREAS, the MCAS is significantly limited and not the best measure of how much students know and does not accurately and effectively measure whether students are meeting the Commonwealth's standards and developing the skills they need to thrive after high school; and

WHEREAS, the MCAS test will be replaced with other measures that more accurately evaluate whether students are meeting our strong, statewide standards and developing the skills they need to succeed in college, the workforce and beyond are educator-led assessments such as projects, papers, tests, group activities that are conducted throughout the school year; and

WHEREAS, the MCAS would be used to identify areas where students need help rather than being the sole factor that determines a student's future and ability to graduate; and

WHEREAS, the punitive use of MCAS as a high school graduation requirement has restricted curriculum and shifted the focus of education in our public schools toward meeting a test score instead of fostering an environment of creativity, critical thinking and real teaching and learning that helps students realize their full potential; and

WHEREAS, pediatricians, researchers and school counselors have warned of the severe impact of high-stakes testing like the MCAS graduation requirement on students' mental health and well being; and

WHEREAS, Massachusetts is one of the few states still requiring students to pass the MCAS in order to graduate; and

WHEREAS, standardized test requirements notoriously stack the deck against students of color, ESL students, those with individualized educational needs and learning disabilities; and

WHEREAS, using MCAS testing as a high school graduation requirement has prevented or delayed thousands of students from earning a diploma, thereby interrupting or derailing education or career plans, with especially harmful impacts on students of color, low-income students, students with disabilities and students for whom English is their second language; and

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED. Students should be evaluated on their full range of talents, abilities, work and attendance; and

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the City Council of Northampton supports passage of Ballot Question 2 to replace the MCAS graduation requirement and require instead that districts certify that students have satisfactorily completed coursework demonstrating mastery of the skills and knowledge required by the Commonwealth's strong, statewide standards in order to graduate; and

THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Administrative Assistant to the City Council shall send a copy of this Resolution to Northampton Mayor Gina-Louise Sciarra, Northampton Superintendent Portia S. Bonner, State Representative Lindsay Sabadosa and State Senator Jo Comerford and the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

In City Council, October 17, 2024
Adopted in Final Reading on Roll Call Vote of 8 Yes, 0 No, 1 Abstention (Councilor Rothenberg)

Attest: *Laura Krutzler* , Clerk of Council

Rules suspended, passed final reading and enrolled.
I hereby certify that the above Resolution was adopted by the Northampton City Council on October 17, 2024

Per Charter Section 3-6, non-binding resolutions are not required to be presented to the Mayor for approval.

Attest: *Laura Krutzler* , Clerk of Council