

August 15, 2025

Chair Michael Rodrigues
Senate Committee on Ways and Means
24 Beacon Street, Room 212
Boston, MA 02133

Vice Chair Joanne Comerford
Senate Committee on Ways and Means
24 Beacon Street, Room 410
Boston, MA 02133

Dear Chair Rodrigues and Vice Chair Comerford:

As Massachusetts organizations committed to educational equity, we see firsthand the challenges of financing higher education for students from low-income backgrounds. We are writing to express our support for the advancement of [H1467/S921](#) - An Act to Facilitate Student Financial Assistance, better recognized as [Universal FAFSA](#) legislation, currently with the Senate Committee on Ways and Means. We are grateful for the language passed in the economic development bill last session, ensuring access to information about financial aid, and for the Joint Committee on Higher Education's favorable report of this bill. We look forward to deepening the progress the Commonwealth has made toward ensuring access to financial aid with the passage of this legislation.

Students who complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) are **84%** more likely to attend college than their counterparts who do not complete the form. Despite FAFSA completion being a strong predictor of college enrollment, eligible graduating seniors in the Commonwealth who did not complete the FAFSA left **over \$63M** of Pell dollars on the table in 2024. Furthermore, Massachusetts ranks only **39th** place nationally for year-over-year increases in FAFSA completion. Meanwhile, all Universal FAFSA states **outperformed** the rest of the country in terms of year-over-year change in public high school FAFSA completion rates. Additional work must also be done to ensure that our eligible "high school completers" are aware of the Massachusetts Application for State Financial Aid (MASFA) in order to increase awareness and access to this novel and valuable program.

Research has shown that hands-on support with completing financial aid applications increases completion rates and that even small increases in financial aid can spur college enrollment. While it is too early for comprehensive data on a national scale, trends around these policies are promising. Early evidence suggests a positive link between universal FAFSA policies and increased college enrollment. In Louisiana, the policy contributed to a significant enrollment gain, particularly at community colleges with especially strong improvements for Black and low-income students.

Additionally, states that have adopted legislation requiring FAFSA completion for graduating students and that have resourced schools to support with FAFSA submission have seen significant increases in FAFSA completion rates, closing gaps between low and high income districts or flipping completion rates **in favor of low income districts.**

Despite available aid, many students, especially those from marginalized backgrounds, face barriers in accessing it, often due to a **lack of information and support.** It is essential that these Massachusetts families are afforded the ability to learn about federal and state grant program eligibility so they do not opt to forgo college without having been provided access to information about financial aid, which may prove to be a key determining factor. Massachusetts students deserve equitable access to information about financial aid and our students and families should have access to support through the process, should they need it.

We strongly urge Senate Ways and Means to advance H1467/S921 - An Act to Facilitate Student Financial Assistance in order to ensure access to information and support with state and federal financial aid forms. We appreciate your work on behalf of the students of the Commonwealth and welcome any questions you may have.

Thank you for your time and leadership in moving this legislation forward.

Sincerely,

