



Facts about the *Student Opportunity Act*

The *Student Opportunity Act* (S. 2350), which is currently before the Massachusetts Senate, would greatly increase preK-12 education funding by implementing the recommendations of the 2015 Foundation Budget Review Commission. Like its predecessor the *Promise Act*, the bill would increase Chapter 70 aid and other education funding by \$1.5 billion over inflation after a seven-year phase-in. **The Fund Our Future coalition strongly supports this funding plan.** The bill also includes language that could potentially give unelected state education officials authority to overrule local spending decisions. **The Fund Our Future coalition strongly opposes stripping power from local residents and their democratically elected school committee members.**

Provisions FOF Supports

The *Student Opportunity Act* would increase funding for:

- **Health care costs** for employees and retirees.
- **Special education students.**
- **English learners.**
- **Low-income students**, by increasing the threshold from 133 percent to 185 percent of poverty and increasing incremental payments based on rates of poverty to a maximum of 100 percent for districts with the highest concentrations.
- **Guidance and psychological services.**
- **Expanding and fixing the special education circuit breaker.**
- Lifting the annual cap on the **Massachusetts School Building Authority** by \$150 million.
- Fully funding the **charter school reimbursement line item** for the next three years, though it does not address the long-term fiscal impact of charter schools on districts.

Provisions FOF Opposes

The *Student Opportunity Act* would:

- Require the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to **set new measures** of “persistent disparities in achievement,” with an **emphasis on test scores — a policy that has failed our students for decades.**
- Require districts to **write plans to address outcome disparities but not new opportunities.**
- Give the commissioner of education the **power to review and require changes** in district plans, potentially diminishing local control over spending decisions.
- Establish commissions on rural schools, data, and local school funding without designating seats for local education associations.

Fund Our Future-Backed Amendments to the *Student Opportunity Act*

PLEASE OPPOSE

Amendment #34 — Accountability: Filed by Sen. Viriato deMacedo (R-Plymouth)

- Allows the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education to designate certain districts as "chronically underperforming" solely on the basis of the commissioner of education disagreeing with the district's plan.
- Gives the commissioner power to demand that local districts change their plan for any school that requires assistance under DESE's accountability system.
- Punishes districts that have even one school in need of intervention or assistance by barring the district from accessing any state education grant funding unless the commissioner agrees with the district plan.
- Assumes DESE knows what each of 225 schools in need of assistance or intervention must do in order to improve despite DESE having a poor track record of success with underperforming and chronically underperforming schools and districts.

PLEASE SUPPORT

Amendment #17 — Targeted Improvement Plans: Filed by Sen. Pat Jehlen (D-Somerville)

- Seeks to maintain local control over the district plans required in S. 2350 to demonstrate how the new funding will improve opportunities for all students, and in particular English learners and low-income students.
- Requires charter schools to also file a plan; not currently required under S. 2350.
- Expands the scope of plans to focus on districts identifying resources and programs that will provide opportunities for a well-rounded education.
- Ensures community stakeholders, including educators, have input into plans.
- Clarifies language to ensure interventions the bill outlines to improve student outcomes are recommended and not required for inclusion in district plans.
- Adds language to ensure that the executive branch has no authority to withhold Chapter 70 funds from school districts.

Amendment #19 — Charter cap reimbursement: filed by Sen. Marc R. Pacheco (D-Taunton)

- Caps the number of charter schools and charter school seats for any fiscal year in which the state fails to fully fund the charter school mitigation account.
- Requires that a financial impact statement be submitted to BESE before it decides on the approval of a new charter school or charter school expansion.

Amendment #61 — Charter Reimbursement Accountability: filed by Sen. Patrick O'Connor (R-Weymouth)

Requires the Commonwealth to draw funding from charter schools to ensure full formula reimbursement to public schools.

Amendment #14 — Commission Representatives: Filed by Sen. Paul Feeney (D-Foxborough)

Adds representatives of the MTA and AFT Massachusetts to the 21ST Century Education Advisory Council, the Data Advisory Commission and the special commission on determining required local contributions as a percentage of the foundation budget.