

# MTA Today

A publication of the Massachusetts Teachers Association  
Volume 52, No. 4/Spring 2022

## FULL SPEED AHEAD FOR FAIR SHARE AMENDMENT





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# MTA Today

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**This edition also includes the Spring issue of The MTA Advantage. A section on the upcoming MTA Annual Meeting of Delegates begins on Page 19.**

## MTA'S MISSION STATEMENT

The Massachusetts Teachers Association is a member-driven organization, governed by democratic principles, that accepts and supports the interdependence of professionalism and unionism. The MTA promotes the use of its members' collective power to advance their professional and economic interests. The MTA is committed to human and civil rights and advocates for quality public education in an environment in which lifelong learning and innovation flourish.

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Merrie Najimy

### MTA Vice President

Max Page

### Executive Director-Treasurer

Lisa Gallatin

### Publisher

Lisa Gallatin

### Communications Director/Editor

James Sacks

### Staff Assistant

Laura Mullen

### Graphic Designer

Joshua Degregorio

## ON THE COVER

Passing the Fair Share Amendment is the focus of intensifying MTA grassroots efforts. MTA members and coalition allies are participating in phone banks and door-to-door canvassing, as well as one-on-one conversations. Pledge cards like those shown in the top photo are being collected. Below, members gathered recently at MTA headquarters to talk up the campaign and hone their advocacy skills. In front are Ismael Colón, left, a middle school Spanish teacher in Waltham, and Sheila Hanley, a retired teacher who worked in the Randolph and Newton public schools. Standing, from left, are Candace Shivers, an associate professor at Mount Wachusett Community College; Saul Ramos, an ESP in the Worcester Public Schools; and Gayle Carvalho, president of the Quincy Education Association. Coverage begins on Page 6. A story about the 2022 MTA Education Support Professionals Conference starts on Page 3, while an article that examines the little-known problem of campus debt is on Page 5. This edition also features a section on the Annual Meeting of Delegates, union elections and proposals to amend MTA Resolutions, Bylaws and Standing Rules. It begins on Page 19.



Cover photos by Eric Haynes  
Cover design by Joshua Degregorio



The Massachusetts Teachers Association  
2 Heritage Drive, 8th Floor  
Quincy, MA 02171-2119  
800.392.6175 or 617.878.8000  
FAX: 617.742.7046  
[www.massteacher.org](http://www.massteacher.org)



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## Quote-Unquote

**"If you're hired on a piece-rate basis, course by course, you're never going to feel secure."**

— **Rebecca Kolins Givan, an associate professor of labor studies and employment relations at Rutgers University, quoted in The Washington Post on the lack of protections for adjunct faculty in higher education**

# ESPs enjoy a chance to meet in person

By Mary MacDonald

They came for the camaraderie, for networking and skill building. And many of the Education Support Professionals who gathered in April for the in-person 2022 MTA ESP Conference say they gained valuable information about how to negotiate better contracts and assert their rights.

Virginia Stepper, a paraprofessional in Bedford, said she appreciates talking to fellow ESPs about their districts, their contracts, and what is happening across the state.

"I come every year," Stepper said. "I come for the professional development. I come for the friendships I develop. I find it very insightful. I've learned that all districts are certainly not the same."

She took careful notes in a session on negotiations in which presenters explained that some ESP contracts now include professional status — and greater job security — after four years.

"I learned about these different rights," Stepper said. "I always learn something new."

More than 150 educators from across Massachusetts attended the event, MTA's first in-person conference in two years. It was held on April 1 and 2 at the Sea Crest Beach Hotel in Falmouth.

MTA Benefits helped sponsor the conference and had a popular table featuring prizes in the event space. The attendance was capped this year due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Typically, an in-person ESP Conference draws about 400 attendees.

The conference featured breakout sessions on union building and bargaining, as well as professional development workshops aimed at expanding the diversity of reading choices for young students and easing conversations about race among colleagues.

Yahaira Rodriguez, chair of the MTA ESP Committee, led a session called "Creating Space to Talk about Race."

It's important for educators to embrace the diversity of the workplace and their students, she said, and avoid microaggressions. Among other things, Rodriguez has overheard school colleagues chiding Spanish-speaking students for speaking in their first language.

"We are working with students who are leaving everything, leaving their culture," Rodriguez said. "Then telling them here that they can't speak their language."

Nicole Jdey, a paraprofessional, attended several sessions at the conference, including one on bargaining contracts. Her local, the Walpole Teachers Association, is in negotiations now, and Jdey found the shared information at the conference helpful in gaining "more knowledge about what to advocate for."

It wasn't all work. The second day of the two-day event started with an invigorating early morning Zumba workout led by Naomi Akan, the newly named 2022 MTA Education Support Professional of the Year. Among other accomplishments, Akan



Above, ESPs attending a workshop called "All Kinds of Diversity: Books and Materials for PreK-6 Classrooms" perused samples of works that could be added to classrooms or libraries. At left, MTA President Merrie Najimy, left, shared a moment with Naomi Akan, the 2022 MTA Education Support Professional of the Year. More than 150 ESPs attended the conference, which was held at the Sea Crest Beach Hotel in Falmouth.

Photos by Jonathan Ng

started an after-school Zumba club at her school, the Lt. Peter Hansen Elementary School in Canton.

She was honored with the award at the traditional opening night dinner.

Speaking to ESPs at the Friday dinner, Akan, an Applied Behavior Analysis tutor, credited leadership development programs, including the union's Leadership Weekends, for helping her meet union siblings and grow professionally.

Akan was among the ESPs who helped to develop the MTA PreK-12 ESP Bill of Rights.

"Because of the ESP Bill of Rights, we are negotiating a seismic and very ambitious living wage for our members," she said. She encouraged fellow ESPs to continue to advocate for themselves.

Among other aspects of her work with the union, Akan was a building representative for her local, the Canton Teachers Association. She now occupies a seat on the MTA Board of Directors, representing not just fellow ESPs but all members in her district.

"I want to say, 'Don't give up,'" Akan told other educators. "Believe in yourself. There is nothing like a strong collective, which is what we have. Remember that you have the power in you to fight."

One of the recent developments for ESPs is the Leadership Mentoring Program. It pairs veteran leaders among Education Support Professionals, including several members who preceded Akan as

ESP of the Year, with members who have started developing their leadership potential.

The program is part of a movement for relevant professional development for ESPs — not simply additions to what teachers are getting. "We're not doing that anymore," Akan said. "We want to create programs that we know are for us, by us. For ESPs, by ESPs."

Sonia Fortin, a former MTA ESP of the Year who now works as a regional representative for the MTA, is among the mentors in the program.

"We're supporting ESPs who want to take on more space in the union," Fortin said in an interview. "It's about leadership. It's about individuals having their own journey and path but mentoring them through the process so they can be successful in whatever they want to do."

The MTA leadership encouraged ESPs at the conference to continue organizing, advocating and fighting for their rights.

"This is your MTA. This is your weekend," said MTA President Merrie Najimy. "Let's continue to build relationships and fight the fights together."

Najimy noted that in recent years, the MTA has become more inclusive for all educators — including ESPs at all levels and faculty and staff at public colleges and universities — as well as continuing to strongly represent preK-12 teachers.

The ESP Bill of Rights is currently gaining momentum across the state. ESPs have formed their

Please turn to **ESPs**/Page 10

# The privilege of serving as your president

Over the last four years, MTA members have demonstrated time and time again that we can make a huge difference in the lives of our students as we help advance the common good in communities across the state. We see it when unionized educators come together, in their locals and across the MTA, to fight and win. And we see it every day.

As I write my last editorial for *MTA Today*, I am reflecting on the work that you have done to strengthen our union muscles, build our collective power, and achieve progress for educators, our public schools, and our public colleges and universities.

It truly has been an honor to serve as your president, and the journey with you has been joyful. This is your union — fully — and it is doing great things.

When I became president in 2018, we were on the path to building a rank-and-file-driven MTA — and I feel confident in saying that today, we are more fully there.



Merrie Najimy  
MTA President

There is still more that we need to do, of course, and there always will be. We must shatter the three-decade-old “Education Reform” systems of forced compliance and austerity, and we need to drive our Commonwealth to take major steps toward racial,

gender, social, economic, and education justice.

What model of education do we want? Do we believe our jobs exist solely so that we can disseminate prescribed information to students and test them on it? Or do we want to embrace their humanity and educate the whole child?

All of us recognize that as the COVID-19 pandemic continues to play a major role in our lives, our students — from prekindergarten through college — are struggling socially, emotionally, and academically.

The officials currently at the top of the state’s education bureaucracy want to go back to a “normal” that cannot exist anymore. And they refuse to acknowledge that for too many students and communities, that “normal” causes deep harm. Now more than ever, we must recognize the moral bankruptcy of that system.

The pandemic has shined a spotlight on the trauma that so many of our students face as a result of poverty, racism, and housing and food insecurity. As we emerge from it, we must move to a trauma-informed practice that makes all of our students feel valued because they’re visible in our schools, in our culture, and in our curriculum.

The MTA’s polling shows that the public agrees with our vision.

Funding is vital and must be sufficient and stable, as we have shown with our legislative victory on the *Student Opportunity Act* and our ongoing advocacy for the *Cherish Act* and the Fair Share Amendment. But it is not everything. As long as we continue to be driven

by false goals, we will not be giving our students the education they need and deserve.

During my tenure, we have moved the MTA further toward being a fighting union — a union that is dedicated to forging and implementing policies that create equity and fairness. MTA-led campaigns have been realized through organizing by unionized educators and our labor allies, building political support along the way.

This has been true especially during the upheaval of the past two years.

Members have developed regional networks and have understood more deeply the value of banding together. Fighting for safe school and college buildings has converged with fighting for racial and social justice and for living wages for Education Support Professionals, adjunct faculty members, and others. We have stopped compartmentalizing.

You have made amazing strides through collective action. MTA educators now understand the immediacy of the need to create antiracist classrooms and structures at all levels. Our members are continuing the work required to make *all* public schools and colleges become places that lift up and affirm our students’ rich identities.

There is progress on many fronts. ESPs have developed a Bill of Rights and are organizing in dozens of cities and towns for respect and a living wage. Adjunct faculty members are moving toward similar forms of advocacy.

The new normal — while we continue to recognize that educators’ working conditions and students’ learning conditions are one and the same — is democratized bargaining: a coalition-based campaign for justice and the common good.

The pandemic has served to remind the public that unions protect not only workers but also the entire community. Our fight is not just for our own rights and benefits. It is to protect our entire communities and make Massachusetts a better place.

As a union, the pandemic has left us stronger and more focused.

And now more than ever, we must continue to act boldly.

So how do we get to a student-centered, highly professionalized and unionized system that serves the interests of all students from preK-16?

Full funding — and stable funding — remains vital.

The union-driven success of the *Student Opportunity Act* legislative campaign was a monumental victory to address the needs that had come to the surface since the enactment of the Education Reform Act of 1993.

And MTA members will rise to the challenge this year as we work to ensure that the Fair Share Amendment ballot measure becomes law, addressing a key gap in the stability of resources for both public education and transportation.

The third piece of the puzzle is guaranteeing permanent funding for public higher education and relieving the huge burden of debt that society is placing on college students. We need to win the *Cherish Act* or similar legislation to help provide both affordability and quality.

To tie all of this together, we must make it clear that we reject the false narrative that underpins a system that does so much harm in so many areas.

Having MCAS as a graduation requirement means keeping a racist, artificial barrier in place to “prove” that public schools are “failing” and denies opportunity to far too many students. Starving public colleges of resources makes the problem worse, especially for working families and students of color.

The MTA’s student-centered priorities are driven by a future for preK-16 education that is largely charted by your own expertise, professionalism, and personal commitment, furthered by the power of our union.

This year, we not only have the chance to win the Fair Share Amendment but also to bring an end to the anti-public-education sentiment that has held sway for too long with representatives of both parties when they’ve held the corner office on Beacon Hill.

Indeed, public education is properly the central issue in the gubernatorial race, intertwined as it is with both economic success and social justice. Our next governor must understand its importance and the urgency of righting what is wrong.

In the past few months, we have seen how right-wing lawmakers, urged on by their allies in a Congress that is in danger of a takeover by authoritarians, have been passing anti-LGBTQ+ laws, crushing restrictions on women’s rights, and legislation that attempts to undermine the teaching of American history.

Massachusetts must be a counterforce to the dire national backdrop.

It is now within our reach to elect a governor who will work hand in hand with the MTA to ensure that our students can get the education they need and deserve while providing educators with the resources and authority to provide it.

It is within our reach to ensure that public education is held in its rightful place: as the most precious resource in our democracy. And that justice in all of its many forms, brought forward by solidarity and collective action, is a consideration at every step along the way.

Be assured that I will fight hard for these goals during the remainder of my presidency and afterward, since they are in my heart and are the bedrock of my principles, values, and beliefs.

As I prepare to leave the MTA presidency, I feel privileged to have served you. I also do so with confidence. That is because I have faith in you, the educators of Massachusetts, to understand this vital truth: When we fight, we win.

## Letters policy

*MTA Today* welcomes letters to the editor from MTA members. Letters should be no longer than 200 words. Each letter submitted for publication must address a topic covered in *MTA Today*, must be signed and must include the writer’s telephone number for confirmation purposes. Opinions must be clearly identified as belonging to the letter-writer. We reserve the right to edit for length, clarity and style. To submit a letter, mail it to *MTA Today*, 2 Heritage Drive, 8th floor, Quincy, MA 02171-2119, or email it to [mtatodayletters@massteacher.org](mailto:mtatodayletters@massteacher.org). For additional information, please refer to the guidelines posted on [www.massteacher.org](http://www.massteacher.org).

# An important but little-known problem

By Scott McLennan

While the problem of student debt related to the cost of higher education is widely known and is the source of policy debates unfolding at the state and national levels, there is a related issue that too often remains hidden.

Campus debt.

To highlight the problem of public colleges and universities accumulating excessive debt for capital improvements, MTA members have used a grant from the union to launch the Massachusetts Campus Debt Reveal project, a follow-up to a national version of the effort that was held last April.

The loan obligations held by the colleges and universities — which run into the billions of dollars across the Massachusetts public higher education system — ultimately rob all students of opportunities and contribute to the student debt crisis by inflating the cost of obtaining a degree.

Prior to 2000, the state paid for most of the major building costs on public college and university campuses. A return to that approach would produce numerous benefits, advocates note.

Joanna Gonsalves, a professor at Salem State University, is a member of a coalition of faculty, staff and students that is fighting not only for greater state investment in public higher education, but also for going back to policies that made the state responsible for campus capital projects.

“While the problem of student debt is well understood, the impact that campus debt has on public higher education is not treated with the same urgency,” said Gonsalves, who is one of the organizers of the debt-reveal project. “This institutional debt is a significant force driving students into debt as their costs rise to pay for campus loan obligations.”

The multi-campus coalition drew more than 100 students and higher education union members to an online event on April 14 that also was attended by legislators.

“Before I was involved with this project, I had been completely unaware that campus debt even existed and of the impact it has on students, faculty, resources and the quality of our education,” said Gayathri Raja, a sophomore at UMass Lowell. “Diving into the financials of our state colleges and speaking to many of the parties involved have opened my eyes to the danger of this immense amount of debt and how it is largely concealed from the public. The changes in public higher education and its funding that this project is fighting for attack the problems at the source.”

The coalition is pushing the Legislature to adopt the *Cherish Act*, which would restore funding to address decades of budget cuts to public higher education and freeze tuition and fees at public colleges and universities for five years.

In addition, the activists are working in support of passage of the Fair Share Amendment in November. The proposed constitutional amendment

## Campus Debt is Sabotaging Public Higher Education

Institutional debt held by public colleges and universities robs every student.



“Diving into the financials of our state colleges and speaking to many of the parties involved have opened my eyes to the danger of this immense amount of debt and how it is largely concealed from the public,” said Gayathri Raja, a sophomore at UMass Lowell. “The changes in public higher education and its funding that this project is fighting for attack the problems at the source.”

would apply a 4 percent tax on annual income above \$1 million and is expected to raise approximately \$2 billion each year for public education and transportation.

The coalition has identified more than \$3 billion in capital debt held by UMass campuses and \$1.2 billion in capital debt on campuses within the broader state higher education system. To press its case, the coalition notes that excessive debt held by public colleges and universities sabotages education in two ways.

First, it leads to the prioritization of fiscal decisions over educational decisions. Increasingly, public college and university trustees and board members are coming from professional backgrounds in the financial services sector rather than from education or public service.

Second, campus debt influences the better-known problem of student debt and leads to cuts in staff and programs to shift spending to debt repayment.

These cuts, coupled with increasing costs and the need for student borrowing, create barriers for entry to public colleges and universities — especially for nontraditional students, students who are the first in their families to go on to higher education, and students of color.

The coalition is active in the campaign to cancel student debt. It supports the initiative by U.S. Senators Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren — and the national Debt Collective — to have the Biden administration strongly address the problem of student debt.

*The Campus Debt Reveal Project is planning to participate in a May 16 Debt-Free Future rally that PHENOM, the Public Higher Education Network of Massachusetts, plans to hold at the Massachusetts State House.*

# Full speed ahead for Fair Share effort

## Campaign continues to gather momentum among MTA members

By Mary MacDonald

A veteran of countless political actions, Deb Gesualdo, president of the Malden Education Association, was readying herself for the legwork needed to bring a request for a resolution supporting the Fair Share Amendment to her city's School Committee.

Usually this involves finding a friendly member of the committee who could sponsor a resolution — or asking the mayor to do so. Before she had time to think it through, however, a School Committee member beat her to the agenda.

Keith Bernard, a newly elected member, sponsored a resolution to support the amendment, and the committee went on to approve it in early April, albeit on a divided vote.

Gesualdo took Bernard's initiative as a sign that information about the Fair Share Amendment is filtering through Massachusetts communities.

Making sure that happens is part of the mission of the growing number of MTA members who are volunteering for the campaign. They are spreading the word and building support for the ballot measure through individual and small-group interactions.

"Someone on the School Committee put it forward before I could even do it. That has never happened before," said Gesualdo, who is also an MTA Senate District Coordinator. "I was getting ready to do the legwork, and I looked at the agenda and thought, 'Gosh! There's a resolution on there!'"

The Fair Share Amendment will go before voters statewide on Nov. 8. It would amend the state Constitution to add 4 percentage points — 4 cents on the dollar — to the tax on the portion of annual income above \$1 million. The Commonwealth now has a flat tax rate for all incomes of 5 percent.

If approved, the ballot measure would raise about \$2 billion each year — needed funds that would be directed to public education and transportation.

In recent months, the MTA's grassroots campaign to support the amendment's passage has kicked into high gear. The current emphasis is on conversations among members, whether through phone calls or talks with groups.

As of the end of April, 24 phone banks had been organized featuring MTA members and more than 54,000 calls to members had been placed. Roughly aligning with several public polls, 82 percent of the people contacted so far have said they plan to vote "yes," according to the campaign.

Meanwhile, physical and digital pledge cards are being distributed and promoted. The straightforward cards are available in both Spanish and English and include essential information about the amendment.

Just before *MTA Today* went to press, door-to-door canvassing of registered voters was getting up and running in several communities, including Pittsfield and Springfield. Boston, New Bedford



Photo by Eric Haynes

MTA members are making phone calls and having one-on-one conversations about the Fair Share Amendment as the campaign gathers momentum. Seated in front are Ismael Colón, a middle school Spanish teacher in Waltham, and Sheila Hanley, a retired educator who worked in Randolph and Newton. Standing are Deb Gesualdo, president of the Malden Education Association, and Saul Ramos, an Education Support Professional in Worcester.

and Lynn all were scheduled to have canvasses launched on April 30, according to Raise Up Massachusetts, the statewide coalition of union, faith-based and community organizations that is working to pass the amendment.

Bernard, who joined the Malden School Committee in January, is an active member of Progressive Mass, which, like the MTA, is a partner in the coalition. As is true of other supporters, Bernard sees a clear need for more education funding in the state.

In his conversations about the amendment, he has explained that the \$1 million income threshold, broken into a weekly amount, is about \$20,000. That helps people see who will be affected and who will not. The additional funds will make a real impact, Bernard said. "Typically, we've underfunded our school systems," Bernard said in an interview. "I wanted to make sure every kid who's going to our school systems had every investment."

The Malden School Committee endorsement is among at least 18 approved by city councils or school committees in Massachusetts communities so far, from Pittsfield in the Berkshires to Lynn on the North Shore. The coalition is encouraging community leaders to support either municipal resolutions or endorsements. Volunteers are also asked to submit letters to newspaper editors and post about their support for the amendment on social media.

The MTA's efforts — like those of allied organizations and the broader campaign — will intensify through the spring and beyond. As the weather warms, MTA Summer Member Organizers will start to reach out to fellow union members — including Education Support Professionals, teachers, higher education faculty members and other staff, from prekindergarten through college — to help pass the ballot measure.

Continued on next page



MTA members are making calls, distributing pledge cards and signing up for canvassing of registered voters in support of the Fair Share Amendment. Holding campaign signs at MTA headquarters in Quincy, from left, are Saul Ramos, an Education Support Professional in Worcester; Candace Shivers, president of the Mount Wachusett chapter of the Massachusetts Community College Council; Ismael Colón, a union representative for the Waltham Educators Association; Gayle Carvalho, president of the Quincy Education Association; Sheila Hanley, an MTA Retired member who worked in Randolph and Newton; Deb Gesualdo, president of the Malden Education Association; and Sara Dion, a teacher who is a member of the Medford Teachers Association.

Photo by Eric Haynes

## Educators reach out to build support for measure

Continued from previous page

Ismael Colón, a Spanish teacher at a Waltham middle school, is among the union members who are distributing the campaign's physical pledge cards. The simple act of handing someone a card gives him an opportunity to briefly explain what the Fair Share Amendment is and what it would do for Massachusetts students and communities.

"It's just telling them a little and getting them engaged to take time to read it," said Colón, who is a building representative at McDevitt Middle School.

In Waltham, he said, he sees evidence of the disparities in educational spending. Like most educators, he has put his own money into his classroom. Colón bought his own projector, for example.

"In our school, we can see the level of economic difference," he said. "Every single classroom should be comfortable for the students. Everything should work in the classrooms. And we're not seeing that."

Colón is collecting the cards he's distributing — and so far, the response has been positive. He feels encouraged about the amendment and what it could mean.

"We could do a whole lot better for our students, for our families — for the working-class families who may not have another car, and they rely on public transportation," Colón said.

The grassroots organizing, and having union members talking to fellow union members, is vital to the success of the campaign, noted MTA President Merrie Najimy, who spoke about the effort at the 2022 MTA Education Support Professionals Conference in early April.

"Our schools are not broken. Our schools are underfunded," she said. "Our colleges and universities are not broken. Our colleges and universities are underfunded — in many ways worse than preK-12 schools."

Ensuring member-to-member contact is the way to win the campaign for the amendment, according to several educators who are engaged in the effort.

"I sneak it into conversations whenever I can," said Sara Dion, a teacher who is a member of the Medford Teachers Association. She's also an elected member of the Somerville School Committee. Dion has an opportunity to bring the amendment up in that sphere, sometimes in discussions of the budget now under development, and is doing that as well.

The responses have generally been positive, said Dion, who is optimistic that the Fair Share Amendment will be approved by Massachusetts voters in the fall.

"I don't know anyone who has an income over \$1 million a year," she remarked. "It seems like such a basic thing. There's way more of us."

Sheila Hanley, an educator who retired after a career in the Randolph and Newton public schools, is among the MTA members making calls to fellow members and having informal conversations about the amendment.

The argument about what's fair — and fair taxation — is well understood among educators, Hanley said. "With just a few exceptions, people are saying, 'Of course I can support that. That's fair,'" said Hanley, who, like Gesualdo, is an MTA Senate District Coordinator.

Hanley enjoys talking to other educators and has found that the conversations make a difference.

"As educators/organizers we know the value of one-to-one conversations with our members," Hanley said. "This campaign success will be in conversations neighbor to neighbor and in conversations with all of the groups we are connected to in our community."

Candace Shivers, president of the Mount Wachusett chapter of the Massachusetts Community College Council, has been talking with her

colleagues on campus for months about the upcoming election. Shivers, who is an associate professor of sociology, is spreading the message through both her personal and union contacts.

"What I've tried to do is let everyone know what's happening, why it's important. Stay involved," she said.

Many educators may not feel the intensity of the upcoming election yet, but Shivers said that as it approaches, the campaign will make sure they're aware of the ballot measure and what that dedicated funding could mean.

Her campus, for example, has funded just one counselor for mental health purposes even amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Awareness of the amendment seems to be growing. Shivers recently spotted an ad in her Facebook feed for the first time.

"Once we get a little bit closer, people are going to start seeing the messaging," she said.

Gesualdo, who has participated in several MTA campaigns — including the "No on 2" effort in 2016 to stop the unfettered expansion of privately run charter schools — is confident that the network of educators covering their communities will sway the outcome.

Like other activists, she said, she's working the message about the Fair Share Amendment into daily conversations — "not just for me, but for building reps, bargaining team members and Executive Board members in Malden."

"Basically, every member we talk to, the Fair Share Amendment is a part of our conversations," Gesualdo added. "We know what wins a campaign. You can sink all the money in the world into commercials, but it's the grassroots connections."

*For more information on the campaign, please go to [massteacher.org/fairshare](https://massteacher.org/fairshare) and regularly visit the MTA's social media pages on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.*



# Thinking About Retiring?

*Stay Connected to the MTA*

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# 'There's a lot of fight in them'

## Locals seek fair contracts by banding together and listening to members

By Scott McLennan and Jonathan Ng

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, educators heard how valued they are — and how essential they are to the well-being of their communities. Yet as locals move past bargaining related directly to the public health crisis and either resume or restart regular contract negotiations, many are hearing a colder message.

"People are feeling like they got a lot of lip service, but there's no backing that up with salaries that people deserve," said Deanna Semple, president of the Wareham Education Association, which has been engaged in a fight to win better pay for Education Support Professionals.

In recent months, locals in communities including Belmont, Cambridge, Brookline and Burlington have been holding actions to win community support and put pressure on school committees. It has been common to see crowds of union members at standouts and school committee meetings, displaying signs and handing out informational flyers to parents.

"The number of members showing up to School Committee meetings and standouts is way up," Semple said. "There are paraprofessionals I've never met coming up to me for flyers and signs. There's a lot of fight in them."

Semple's remarks echo the rallying cry that has become common at MTA gatherings over the past few years: "When we fight, we win."

The hard work of democratizing bargaining and creating regional collaboration is behind the uptick in member activism, according to MTA President Merrie Najimy.

"When we engage more members in bargaining, they experience and witness firsthand the disrespect they are being treated with at the bargaining table," Najimy said. "That has engendered righteous indignation and a willingness for more union members to act up. And when they talk about standing up for themselves, they know that they are also standing up for their students."

Part of the anger that MTA members are demonstrating comes from their awareness that Massachusetts currently has resources from better-than-expected state revenues and from federal coronavirus-related stimulus funding, some of which is specifically intended for public education. Many locals believed that districts finally had the opportunity to improve pay for ESPs as well as address staffing issues and other school needs.

But many local unions report hearing a familiar excuse: "We have no money for that."

The Halifax Teachers Association is among the locals feeling that sting.

HTA members poured into a School Committee meeting in April following a successful standout



Above, Brookline Educators Union activist Graciela Mohamedi, a high school science teacher, spoke during a rally for a fair contract, addressing the need for a more diverse educator workforce in the town's public schools. The BEU is seeking stronger diversity and inclusion language in negotiations. At left, Halifax Teachers Association member Steve Ruisi, left, joined fellow HTA educators Tiffany Easter and Dick Bayramshian at Town Hall to convey a message about the local's key bargaining demand.

Photos by Scott McLennan and Jonathan Ng

at the town center. Educators shared their stories and perspectives about cost-of-living expenses, accelerating inflation, higher health insurance premiums, and having to work several jobs to make ends meet.

When federal pandemic relief funds went into state, city and town coffers, HTA educators thought it might mean there was hope for their needs to be addressed.

"As unprecedented stimulus money was approved for towns and schools, we were again optimistic," teacher Steve Ruisi told the Halifax School Committee in April. "We argued that you have a once-in-a-lifetime amount of federal money to help build your budget. Please invest in us."

But the School Committee has rebuffed the HTA's wage proposals.

HTA members also lamented Halifax's decision in late 2021 to provide stipends to all town employees except educators. "We were crushed, shocked, and left disrespected," said Ruisi. "Invest in your teachers. The town has the money. Stay at the table with us and let's continue to work together on a fair three-year contract."

Najimy traces current attitudes and approaches among union members to the first MTA Bargaining Summit, which was held in 2015. In the years since, more leaders and activists have participated in that

summit and shaped a shift toward more transparent bargaining.

It is no coincidence, Najimy said, that Belmont is acting in a bold, unified fashion across its membership, given that the local's president, John Sullivan, spearheaded efforts to increase member involvement in contract work. State labor officials rejected attempts by the Belmont district to limit the size of the local's bargaining team, and that inspired many other locals to engage a larger number of members as silent representatives at contract sessions.

Not only are the fights for improved working conditions more visible within local unions but they also are becoming better known among MTA locals. It is now common to see members from different unions showing up to support the actions of colleagues in neighboring districts.

And they talk to each other.

The Brookline Educators Union has been in a heated battle with the town School Committee over a fair contract. The BEU maintains that the committee is undermining the quality of the highly regarded school system by flatly rejecting proposals for wage improvements, racial justice measures and better working conditions to ensure that students' needs are met.

Please turn to **TTA president's advice**/Page 31

# ESPs get together in person to network and learn

Continued from Page 3

own bargaining units and are taking leadership positions within educators' unions in general. And 63 MTA locals in contract negotiations are putting a living wage for Education Support Professionals high on their bargaining agenda.

"We're now at a place where because we've really opened up the MTA, ESPs are really starting to feel like you own this union," Najimy said, adding: "It's time to change our name."

Her reference to the ongoing work of the Name Change Task Force, initiated as a result of a new business item at the 2021 Annual Meeting of Delegates, drew a loud whoop and applause from the crowd. The task force has begun a process of surveying members about changing the name of the MTA. Information about the survey and buttons asking "What's in a Name?" were distributed at the conference.

The ESPs in attendance were the first rank-and-file members to begin to weigh in on the future name of the union, Najimy noted. "Take the buttons back to your local. Take the literature and start the conversation."

MTA Vice President Max Page noted the wave of unionization that is taking place across the country. The day the conference began, the first Amazon warehouse in the U.S. had a successful union vote.



In the exhibit room at the hotel, one of the most popular tables included a photo booth with fun props. During the conference, groups of Education Support Professionals got together to pose during breaks in the sessions.

Photo by Jonathan Ng

Within the MTA, locals in Andover, Shrewsbury, Haverhill and Tewksbury have made significant gains in their contracts for ESPs in recent months as part of the Bill of Rights campaign. "This has gone from being an idea we had to a movement across our union," Page said.

Susan Soares, the 2021 MTA ESP of the Year, said the experience had been inspiring and helped her strategize within her local. ESPs are gaining more power collectively, noted Soares, who works in

special education at the Stratton Elementary School in Arlington. "Being an ESP of the Year has shown my district that paraprofessionals are more important than just pawns to fill in and put where they're needed," she said. "It's elevating the importance of what we do every day for our students and each other in the districts."

For information on ESPs and the MTA PreK-12 ESP Bill of Rights, please visit [massteacher.org/esp](https://massteacher.org/esp).

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# MTEL system stands in the way of diversity

Legislation backed by the MTA would allow alternatives to current teacher licensing regimen

By Scott McLennan

Rosa Valentin has been an educator in Springfield for roughly 30 years. In fact, she now teaches the teachers who go on to work with the district's English learners.

Yet Valentin's career growth has been blocked. Though certified to teach and having held vice principal roles in the Springfield Public Schools, Valentin has not scored high enough on one portion of the state licensure exam to be an administrator in a Massachusetts public school.

And Valentin sees the same fate befalling excellent bilingual educators who are blocked from becoming licensed classroom teachers for not scoring high enough on the writing portion of the MTEL — the Massachusetts Tests for Educator Licensure.

"There's a lot of research to prove that acquisition of a second language is not easy. And there is the cultural component, too," Valentin said, pointing to how she and other bilingual educators often move between two worlds of communication as they go from home to work.

Moreover, Valentin's practical experience tells her that students do better when they see themselves represented among their educators. That is a reason

Both Valentin and Najimy noted that a more diverse teaching force would benefit all students, not just students of color.

she has stayed connected to a summer program that helps Springfield students, many from Spanish-speaking homes, overcome academic challenges.

"Having that cultural connection helps them succeed," she said.

In Springfield, English is not the first language for nearly 30 percent of the students, and 8 percent of the student population is white. The teaching force, however, is overwhelmingly white.

Like others pushing for greater diversity in the teaching ranks, Valentin said that the system based on MTEL results "isn't benefiting the kids since it has narrowed the diversity in our school systems."

Such concerns are behind the MTA's strong support for *An Act relative to educator diversity*, which is pending in the Legislature.

The bill would permit the state to develop alternatives to MTEL, allowing for a variety of ways to demonstrate the ability to be an effective classroom teacher.

"Just as one-size-fits-all assessments do not accurately demonstrate our students' abilities, the narrow scope of the MTEL has been identified as discriminatory against educators of color and educators who are linguistically gifted but for whom English is not their first language," said MTA President Merrie Najimy. "There are other ways to demonstrate competency as an educator, and *An Act relative to educator diversity* — which closely mirrors a bill that MTA members worked on — sets the state on a path to bring further excellence into our classrooms."

Both Valentin and Najimy noted that a more diverse teaching force would benefit all students, not just students of color.

"This bill will help shatter stereotypes, allow more students to experience cultural affinity with their teachers, greatly expand the perspectives in our classrooms, and simply allow more people of color into the highly regarded profession of teaching. It will also influence our educator preparatory programs," Najimy said.

The bill has been favorably reported out by the Legislature's Joint Committee on Education and was awaiting a vote by the full Legislature as of late April.

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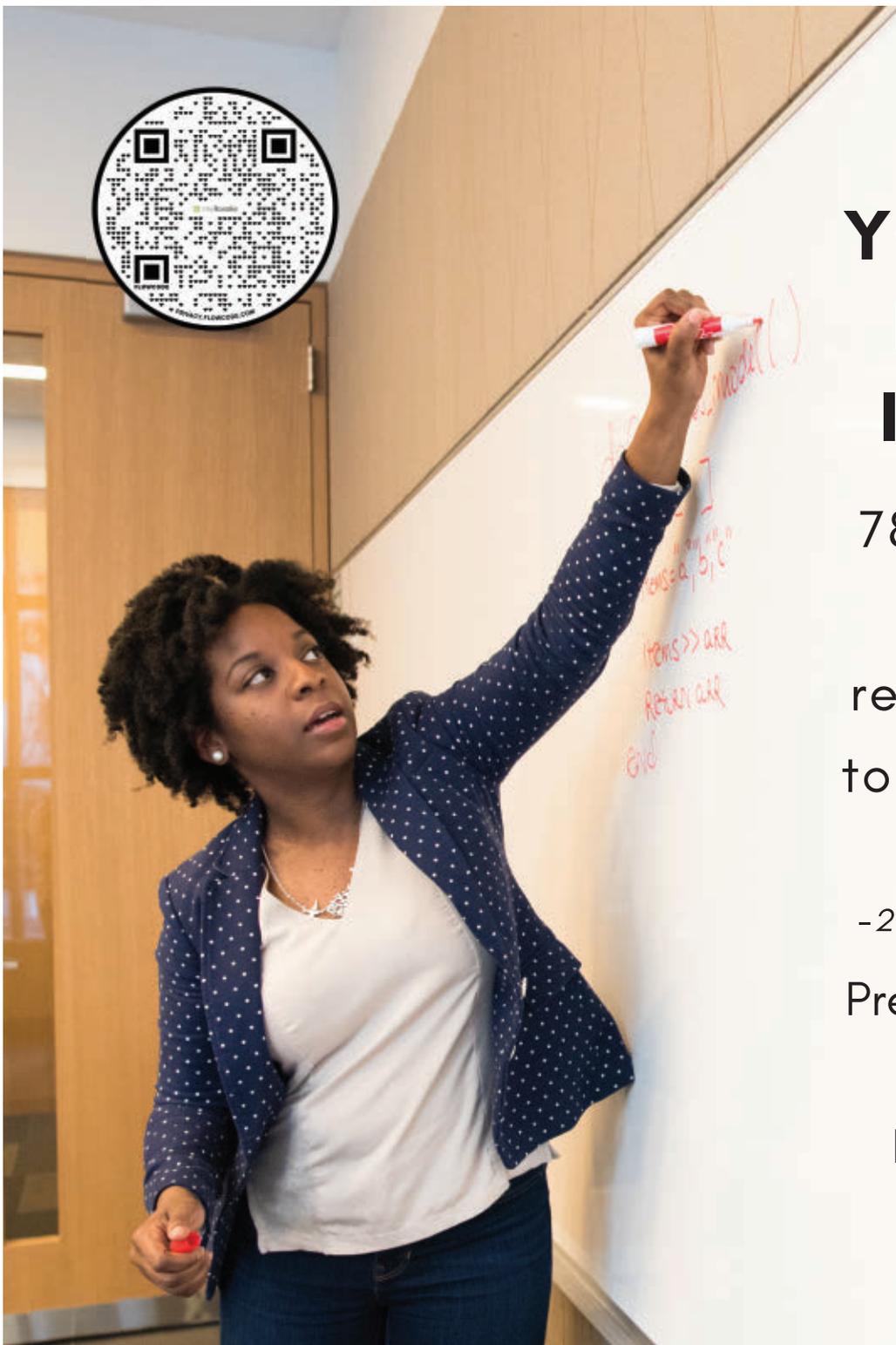
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# How to fight unemployment insurance fraud

Unemployment insurance fraud — also called UI fraud or unemployment benefits fraud — is nothing new. Arguably it goes back to the origin of unemployment benefits.

But over the last two years, the rate of unemployment benefits fraud has exploded. As a result, millions of people are now dealing with the impact of identity theft and fraud.

As with any threat, it's important to understand how UI fraud happens, how to keep your personal information from falling prey to it, and what to do if you become a victim.

Unemployment insurance fraud happens when someone knowingly collects benefits by providing false or inaccurate information when filing a claim. Instances can include:

- Returning to work but continuing to collect unemployment benefits.
- Working a part-time or temporary job without reporting those earnings when filing claims.
- Withholding information or providing false information when filing claims, including using personal data obtained through identity theft.

Unemployment benefits fraud is punishable by law and may be a state or federal offense. Violators who are caught face serious consequences and penalties.

### Escalation during the pandemic

As a response to the economic turmoil caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, programs providing unemployment benefits were expanded, and eligibility requirements were adjusted under the federal CARES Act.

State unemployment departments were overwhelmed with an influx of claims, struggled to navigate new rules using outdated systems, and ultimately had difficulty keeping up. This created conditions ripe for fraud.

The U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Inspector General has estimated that more than \$87 billion had been paid out improperly through fraud or errors as of September 2021, though ultimately that number could turn out to be much higher once all instances are uncovered. And that figure doesn't include additional fraud that was caught by state unemployment departments before payments were distributed.

The Department of Labor has now established the National Unemployment Insurance Fraud Task Force and directed millions of dollars to investigations and creating new identity verification tools. But nevertheless, millions of Americans are left navigating the process of identity restoration and regaining financial health after becoming fraud victims.

Unfortunately, most people don't find out they are victims of UI fraud until the damage has been done. People typically find out that they are victims of fraud when:



- They receive paperwork in the mail that shows benefits they didn't apply for, including Form 1099-G, which is used to report income from unemployment benefits.

- Their employer or a past employer calls, saying an unemployment claim has been filed under their name.

- They try to file a legitimate claim and are subsequently denied.

In addition, many taxpayers learn they are victims of fraud only after they file their federal tax returns and are alerted by the IRS that they didn't report all of their income. Some retired Americans find out they are fraud victims after the U.S. Social Security Administration alerts them that their benefits are being reduced.

Although victims of UI fraud are not responsible for the benefits stolen in their name, they do experience delays in receiving legitimate benefits, are at risk of additional fraud, and have to cope with the impact mostly on their own. The process of reporting and recovering from fraud is neither quick nor easy — and an investigation can take weeks or even months!

If you are a victim of unemployment insurance fraud, start by doing the following:

- Report the fraud to your employer and your state's unemployment office. If false claims were made in more than one state, you'll need to contact each state individually. Document all case and confirmation numbers as well as the names of people you speak to at the unemployment office. Alert your employer if it is not already aware of the situation.

- File a complaint with the Federal Trade Commission. Visit the FTC's identity theft website, [www.identitytheft.gov](http://www.identitytheft.gov), to file a report and get information on additional best practices. The commission's site may also provide tools to help you pull credit reports and close fraudulent credit accounts opened in your name.

- Contact each of the three major credit reporting agencies. Contact Equifax, Experian and TransUnion

to place a fraud alert on your account and freeze your credit. A fraud alert requires any company trying to open new credit in your name to first verify your identity. A credit freeze prevents anyone, including you, from opening new credit in your name until the freeze is lifted. These steps can help deter further fraud and minimize damage to your financial health.

Following these steps is only the beginning. Recovering your identity and rebuilding your financial health after fraud is a long process.

### Help protect yourself

You should also take steps to protect yourself on an ongoing basis:

- Regularly check your credit reports and financial statements.

- Watch for suspicious mail, phone calls, emails or social media requests.

- Look for warning signs such as offers from individuals or organizations promising faster unemployment benefits, requests from people offering money in exchange for personal information, or letters or emails indicating that new accounts or unemployment insurance benefit claims have been initiated in your name.

- Practice good digital hygiene by updating passwords, using two-factor authentication and avoiding oversharing information online or responding to suspicious requests.

- File your taxes promptly. Filing taxes becomes more difficult once a criminal does so in your name. Obtaining an IRS identity protection PIN can help keep that from happening.

- Only report legitimate income on your taxes. The state should issue an updated 1099-G once a fraud report is filed.

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# Gubernatorial candidates hear from members

By Scott McLennan

Highlighting the critical importance of public education in the Massachusetts gubernatorial race, Democratic candidates Maura Healey and Sonia Chang-Díaz met virtually with MTA members at three recent forums.

With Governor Charlie Baker and Lieutenant Governor Karyn Polito not seeking re-election, the field is wide open for those who want to occupy the corner office in the State House. Healey and Chang-Díaz, who have both worked closely with the MTA in the past, are leading candidates seeking the support of educators.

Healey, the state's current attorney general, and Chang-Díaz, a state senator, first heard from MTA members of color and then individually attended sessions during which MTA members described their working conditions and the learning conditions of their students. Hundreds of MTA members participated in the events, which took place in March, in advance of the work of the union's Candidate Recommendation Committee.

MTA President Merrie Najimy and Vice President Max Page moderated the conversations. Najimy told MTA members that this year's gubernatorial race can be a "game changer for education."

Najimy framed the conversations as opportunities to address the challenges that educators have been facing for decades — not just during the two years of the COVID-19 pandemic.

She brought up the impact on public education as income inequality has grown, affecting the quality of life for students and their families as well as for educators and their families; how austerity budgets for public education have become the norm; and how educator autonomy has been usurped by top-down mandates. Public higher education is increasingly growing out of reach for many people in the state because of rising costs. And adjunct faculty members are still being unjustly exploited at public colleges and universities.

"What we need from our next governor is a willingness to reject the 'broken-schools' narrative that Democrats and Republicans have been running on for 30 years and instead to be relating to educators, students and families to learn what the conditions are — what the circumstances are in our schools and in our society," Najimy told members attending one of the forums.

MTA members brought forward a variety of issues. They pressed for the need for alternative assessments of the work happening in preK-12 schools and an end to the MCAS graduation requirement.

They described the impact of austerity budgeting on public college campuses, such as the reduction of library services, and what that means for students. They called for changes to teacher licensure as a way to boost the racial and ethnic diversity of the state's teaching force. They raised the issue of eliminating the laws that prohibit public-sector unions from going on strike. They challenged the candidates to make public higher education accessible to all students in the Commonwealth.

And the list went on over the course of the sessions, each of which lasted more than an hour. The candidates did as much listening as talking, and MTA members provided even more input via the online chat function.

Both Healey and Chang-Díaz pledged to be good working partners with the MTA.



Maura Healey



Sonia Chang-Díaz

Please turn to **In conversations**/Page 33

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**FITCHBURG** — Karen Melanson: second Saturday of each month, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., Fitchburg Teachers Association office, 245 River St., Fitchburg; call 978.660.4359 or email [kmelanson@massteacher.org](mailto:kmelanson@massteacher.org).

**HOLYOKE** — Ron Lech: third Saturday of each month, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., MTA Western Office, 55 Bobala Road, Suite 3, Holyoke; call 413.893.9173 or email [rlech@massteacher.org](mailto:rlech@massteacher.org).

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Saturday of each month, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., MTA Northeast Office, 50 Salem St., Building B, Lynnfield; call 978.660.4171 or email [bcallaghan@massteacher.org](mailto:bcallaghan@massteacher.org).

**PITTSFIELD** — Ward Johnson: second Saturday of each month, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., MTA Berkshire Office, 188 East St., Pittsfield; call 413.443.1722 or email [wjohnson@massteacher.org](mailto:wjohnson@massteacher.org).

**RAYNHAM** — Raymond Thompson: third Saturday of each month, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.; and Lawrence Abbruzzi: second Saturday of each month, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.; MTA Southeast Office, 756 Orchard St., third floor, Raynham. Contact Thompson at 617.347.4425 or [rthompson@massteacher.org](mailto:rthompson@massteacher.org); or contact Abbruzzi at 508.824.9194 or [labbuzzi@massteacher.org](mailto:labbuzzi@massteacher.org).

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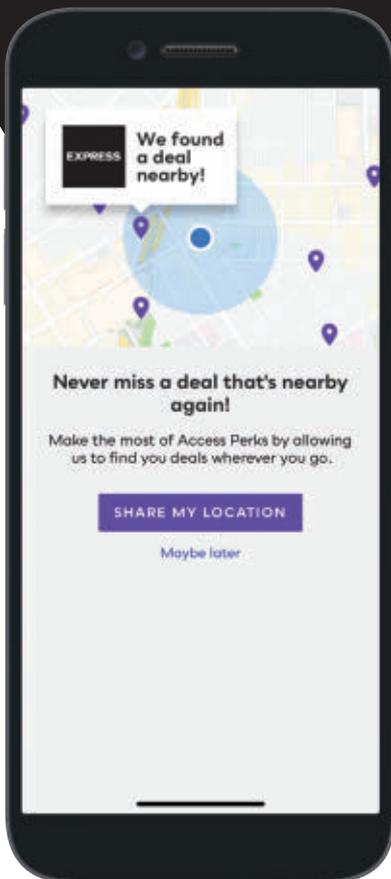
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# MTA to hold in-person Annual Meeting

By Mary MacDonald

The 2022 MTA Annual Meeting of Delegates will be held in person on May 20 and 21 at the Hynes Convention Center in Boston. Virtual participation will be available for those who feel the need for it because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

This is the first time since 2019 that the Annual Meeting delegates will gather in person. The meeting will be the association's 177th since its founding in 1845.

The decision to hold a two-day in-person meeting with a virtual component was made by the MTA Board of Directors at its meeting in March, as infection rates for the coronavirus were dropping. To promote safety for those attending the meeting in Boston, proof of vaccination and face masks will be required. In addition, participants attending the Annual Meeting will be required to show proof of a negative COVID-19 test taken within 48 hours of the start of the event.

To ensure that all delegates feel they can take part in the meeting safely, the MTA Board agreed to provide three options for attendance. The options are participating in the main meeting space, with traditional seating by region and without any spacing or social distancing; seating in a separate room in the convention center that provides for a 3-foot separation between people and for video and audio streaming; and virtual attendance.

The meeting is where essential MTA business takes place each year, including union elections and approval of the association's operating budget. The new budget year, fiscal 2022-2023, begins on July 1.

The meeting will feature reports by MTA President Merrie Najimy, whose second term is drawing to a close, by Vice President Max Page, and by Executive Director-Treasurer Lisa Gallatin.

The first session will begin at noon on Friday, May 20, and the agenda for the day will conclude with speeches by candidates for president and vice president. The following day, the meeting resumes at 9 a.m. The election of candidates is scheduled to start at 11 a.m., after action on the proposed budget, and will take place within the business session (in person and virtual). If action on the budget goes beyond 11 a.m., elections will begin immediately afterward. Delegates will vote to select officers — including MTA President and Vice President — as well as decide races, by district, for positions on the Board of Directors. Retired Members Committee seats also will be filled.

There are three candidates for MTA President: former Vice President Erik J. Champy, Lamikco "Meka" Magee of the Amherst-Pelham Education Association, and current Vice President Page. Two candidates are running for Vice President: Donna Grady of Franklin and Deb McCarthy of Hull.



Ayanna Pressley



Naomi Akan



Gladys Vega



Elizabeth Warren



Natalicia Tracy

The Annual Meeting also will include the consideration of amendments to the MTA Bylaws and Resolutions and voting on new business items with and without budgetary implications.

The recognition portion of the meeting on Saturday morning will include presentations to two national figures, U.S. Representative Ayanna Pressley and U.S. Senator Elizabeth Warren, who each will receive the 2022 MTA Friend of Education Award.

Pressley, who represents the highly diverse 7th Congressional District, won her first term in November 2018, becoming the first woman of color to be elected to the U.S. House of Representatives from Massachusetts. She is a dedicated activist for social and racial justice and a former member of the Boston City Council. During her time on the council, Pressley was heavily involved in working on education issues.

Warren, who was elected to a second term in the Senate in November 2018, is a leading voice for progressive policies and a fierce advocate for consumers and the middle class. As a senator, she has helped secure \$750 million in debt relief for students who were misled by predatory for-profit colleges.

The 2022 MTA Education Support Professional of the Year, Naomi Akan, also will be honored. Akan is an Applied Behavior Analysis Tutor who has worked at an elementary school in Canton for the past six years. She is a member of two influential community organizations, Canton Families Embracing Diversity and the Canton Diversity Equity and Inclusion Committee, which helps the public schools develop intentional and inclusive hiring practices.

The 2022 MTA Friend of Labor Award will be presented to Natalicia Tracy, a senior policy advisor at the U.S. Department of Labor's Occupational Safety and Health Administration.

Tracy previously was the executive director of the Brazilian Worker Center in Boston, a professor at UMass Boston and a lecturer and resident scholar at the university's Labor Resource Center. Tracy co-founded the Massachusetts Coalition for Domestic Workers.

The President's Award will honor Gladys Vega, executive director of the Chelsea-based nonprofit La Colaborativa, a community organization that works with residents of several cities to strengthen economic empowerment, health, education, and food and housing security. Vega became the executive director after a 16-year tenure as a community organizer.

The delegates will consider a proposed MTA operating budget of \$50,066,992 for the coming year. A vote is scheduled for Saturday morning, prior to the election of officers. The Advisory Budget Committee, the Executive Committee and the Board of Directors have proposed annual dues of \$483 for full-time active members, which is the same amount as this year. Dues for secretaries, clerks and custodians would remain at \$290 under the proposal, while dues for Education Support Professionals, including food service personnel and paraeducators, would remain at \$145.

In addition, the proposed Public Relations/Organizing Campaign budget of \$1,790,120 will be considered. The recommended general dues assessment for the PR/Organizing budget is \$20. For secretaries, clerks and custodians, the assessment would be \$12. Paraeducators, food service personnel and other Education Support Professionals would be assessed \$6.

*For additional information and updates concerning the Annual Meeting, visit [massteacher.org/annualmeeting](http://massteacher.org/annualmeeting). Statements by candidates appear on Pages 20 through 25. A story on contested races and candidates declared elected is on Page 30.*

## Candidate for MTA President: Erik J. Champy

**A**s an educator with more than three decades of union activism, I am delighted to be running for the office of President of the Massachusetts Teachers Association. As the candidate with the most experience at the local, state, and national levels of our unions, I bring a breadth of knowledge and a record of accomplishment to the role that I am seeking.

**As your fellow educator,** I have served as an elementary teacher and middle/high school counselor. For many years, I assisted as a peer mentor and data coach, taught undergraduate and graduate courses as an adjunct professor and supervised student teachers. Along with my students, fellow educators, parents and community members in my regional district, I have participated in numerous efforts as we achieved our shared goals.

**As a community leader,** I have been very active with the Salem State University Alumni Association for three decades. Aside from serving on committees, I've had the honor of representing fellow alumni for five years as President and continue to serve as a Legacy Board Member. At the state level, I have volunteered with the Massachusetts Parent Teacher Association, led as the 35th State President, and participated in various leadership roles. Since 2019, I have been elected twice as a Member Representative of the National PTA Board of Directors. As one of the leaders of the largest volunteer child nonprofit in the world, I have the opportunity to work with parents, educators and communities to ensure that "every child's potential becomes a reality."

**As your MTA Vice President,** I worked with our MTA committees representing ALL members of our association. I extended my assistance to

our local presidents and coalition partners throughout Massachusetts. I attended regional meetings and supported the efforts of our members in the Massachusetts Community College Council, the Massachusetts State College Association and the Higher Education Leadership Council, as well as associations within Berkshire, Bristol, Norfolk and Plymouth counties. I visited many of your school communities and campuses, conversed with you and your colleagues and enjoyed meeting and reading to your students. As your next president, I



will continue to participate in all of these efforts.

As chair of the Advisory Budget Committee, I advocated for a \$0 net change in your dues for the two years I served as your officer. Along with committee members and staff, I led training for our new presidents and leaders at the Summer Conference. Along with our members, I continued to lobby for your interests from Beacon Hill to Capitol Hill. I met with our congressional leaders and many of our state legislators. Throughout my term, I was the only MTA officer to consistently represent your voice among state leaders at the National Education Association, National Council of Urban Education Associations, and National Council of State Education Associations. As your Vice President, I shared your mission, vision and values as a unionist and demonstrated my commitment to the MTA.

**As your next MTA President,** I am most interested in your voice and choice as we strengthen our union. I have a vision that goes beyond what MTA is today and looks at what MTA can become. As I crisscross our Commonwealth, it is quite clear what our members want and deserve: **results** not rhetoric, **service** not slogans, **teamwork** not trouble. We have the talent, time and treasure to reimagine our state association and answer the essential question: **What's best for our members?** As your next leader, I am committed to working with you as we:

- **Prioritize contract negotiations and enforcement**



- **Explore election reform in the MTA**
- **Train local officers monthly**
- **Strive for Social Security fairness**
- **Insist upon a living wage for Education Support Professionals**
- **Advocate for and accomplish our legislative priorities**
- **Lobby for COLA increases**
- **Address the needs of higher education**
- **Expand the MTA Benefits program**
- **Pursue a better state retirement formula**
- **Gain greater health and dental benefits**
- **Re-create and expand partnerships**
- **Achieve victories through ESSA**
- **Provide quality PD, test prep and licensure assistance**
- **Enrich orientation programs for leaders**
- **Offer funding for NBPTS certification**
- **Increase member participation at union conferences**
- **Deliver Diversity, Equity and Inclusion trainings regularly**
- **Identify and promote alternatives to state assessments**
- **Celebrate our differences and successes**

**TOGETHER, WE ARE ONE MTA!** Moving forward, I am committed to unifying our membership, standing shoulder to shoulder as we continue to support and advance your professional and economic interests. We must strengthen our commitment to human and civil rights as we advocate for quality public education. I am confident that we can capitalize upon our strengths and learn from our challenges. As the largest labor union in Massachusetts, we must lead our profession and public education forward. Some may suggest that there is only one of two approaches to MTA leadership: either compromise or fight. As your next MTA President, I will continue to work on your behalf, using all of our collective power, strategies, and resources to support your decisions in determining what will best serve MTA members, our students and our communities. **We need to rebuild a culture of trust.**

Throughout my years of activism, I have had opportunities to listen, learn and lead. As your officer, I was committed to participating in all committee meetings; represented your interests at the local, statewide and national levels; worked diligently to ensure that our dues did not increase; developed relationships and promoted partnerships; endorsed efforts within your local associations; and earned your support as I exercised my role representing you. I am a proven leader with significant experience from preschool through graduate school. I have a record of building strong coalitions with stakeholders to achieve positive results.

I am well prepared, deeply experienced and best positioned to serve as your next MTA President. I ask for your support and vote on Saturday, May 21. **Mostly, I thank you for all that you do for our profession, fellow educators, students, families and communities!**

# Candidate for MTA President: Lamikco (Meka) Magee

**M**y name is Lamikco “Meka” Magee, and I am a middle school teacher. For 20 years I have served students in secondary and higher education. As a graduate of Springfield Central High School, I believe that our public education system is the best in the country. During my journey in the education profession, and raising my four children along the way, I have earned an M.Ed. and a Juris Doctor degree. I am a proud military veteran, having served on active duty in the United States Air Force. As a trained mediator, I think about collaborative processes for decision-making. In my present role as a local president, I believe in servant leadership with strong member involvement.

We deserve to work in an environment that brings us joy and must use our power to create the type of spaces in which we thrive and spread the joy we create to our students, colleagues, and the community.



With over 100,000 members, we are the largest union in Massachusetts, and our voice is immensely powerful. We have the capacity to be a great resource for our affiliates to access the

knowledge they need to bargain for better working conditions. The MTA needs a data-management system that local presidents can access to facilitate bargaining.

**A**lthough I work in preK-12, I have a healthy respect for what community colleges contribute to educating our youth. Professional staff need to be valued as the glue that holds these institutions together. As a former instructor in continuing education, I know the work of part-time staff is valuable, and we need to recognize and support them. I appreciate all that you do. Community colleges are a crucial resource for our residents and deserve the full support of the MTA to increase funding.

After graduating from STCC, a community college, my oldest two children attended UMass Amherst. Massachusetts has a strong public university system and with the powerful voices of union members we can make it better. I would like to see all students in Massachusetts have the opportunity to attend college for free. Student loan debt has financially crippled three generations.

We have the capacity to gain the attention of all of the stakeholders in education, to make them listen, to push forth the voices of our members, who demand better working conditions and better learning conditions for our youth. We must end high-stakes testing and the use of MCAS as a deciding measure of educator effectiveness. Massachusetts has the greatest public education system in the country, and that’s because we are vigilant. And because we are vigilant, we know there’s more work to do. We know that we must be united in our voices to fund our schools, dismantle institutional racism, and demand that our students be respected as individuals, all worthy of a great public education.

As a member of our profession, I think about the different ways in which participation in government improves our working conditions and student learning conditions. I was a delegate from my town to my political party’s state convention and wrote an amendment to the party platform for standards in law-enforcement credentialing. Police interact with students in our schools. They make life-and-death decisions while serving the residents of Massachusetts. These public officers deserve to be, and must be, well prepared by educators to serve and protect. The strength of the democratic process allowed this worthy amendment to pass.

For over a decade, I have been actively involved in my local, the MTA, and the National Education Association: Emerging Leaders and Next Generation Leadership, NEA’s Teacher Leadership Initiative, the Ethnic Minority Affairs Committee, the Public Relations/Organizing Campaign Committee, the Bylaws and Rules Committee, the Strategic Plan Review Task Force, and the Task Force on Race. I have been a delegate to both the MTA Annual Meeting and NEA Representative Assembly.

My service record demonstrates my dedication to the teaching profession and reflects my values. I serve as an Executive Committee member on the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation. The CAEP sets the standards for most of the educator-preparation programs in the country. I traveled in 2019 for the U.S. Department of Education Fulbright-Hays Scholarship Travel Abroad to Tanzania program with a group of American educators. There we worked with Tanzanian educators to develop a curriculum that offers an authentic view of African cultures. My many safaris abroad, immersed in cultures where I do not speak the language, have expanded my perspective on what educators must do better to serve our English Language Learners. I would love to see an MTA initiative for our members to travel abroad.

These are certainly challenging times, and we need strong leadership. At the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, we had over 100 members



involved in negotiating our Memorandum of Agreement to ensure the health and safety of our members when we returned to in-person learning. We live with heavy hearts after the murder of George Floyd.

Our local amended our bylaws to include antiracism training for our leadership and collaborated with the district to offer antiracism training to members. This has been a tough two years for employees in public education. School districts in other states are forced into shorter school days and other drastic measures due to the teacher shortage in the nation. In the midst of this shortage, our local fought for higher wages for ESPs and won.

**I** make it my business to boldly lift my voice to move educators forward within the MTA and wherever the voice of an educator needs to be heard. My vision is to unite the MTA and truly release the power of this organization. I recognize and appreciate the contributions of those who paved the way for us, our retired members. I will listen to all of our members and work together with you to understand your needs and use MTA power and resources to make sure your work is valued and you are compensated for what you bring to our profession.

## Candidate for MTA President: Max Page

It has been my great privilege to serve as your Vice President for these past four years. The experience of working alongside MTA President Merrie Najimy to lead our union has only reinforced my fundamental commitments — to public education as the foundation of democracy, to unions as the essential organizations for achieving justice, and to the continuing transformation of the MTA into a social justice union based in rank-and-file power. I am thrilled and honored to run for President with Deb McCarthy as Vice President so we can continue to fight for justice — education, economic, racial, and gender justice — and achieve it by growing our union power.

I live in the house I grew up in, and I went to the same Amherst public schools my three children have attended. I am the son of two MTA members and public school and college educators. My father, a refugee from Nazi Germany, was able through the GI Bill to become a professor of English at UMass Amherst, and he was a founding member of the MTA local I would lead 30 years later. My mother, born in Camden, New Jersey, was also a longtime MTA member, as a drama teacher and then as principal of elementary schools in Rowe and South Hadley, before finishing her work as an education professor at Mount Holyoke College. I have had a career as a teacher of American history, with a focus on the history of cities and historic preservation.

As soon as I arrived at UMass in 2001, I became involved in my local, the 1,500-member Massachusetts Society of Professors. I was President of the MSP and led bargaining campaigns that resulted in two path-breaking contracts, winning paid family and medical leave and pay parity for adjunct faculty. At the end of my term as President of the MSP, I focused on work within the MTA, as a member of the MTA Executive Committee and Board, as head of the Revenue Committee, as Vice Chair of the Government Relations Committee, and now as Vice President.

I am proud of the work we have done together in the past several years



to move the MTA forward. We have supported local organizing as the key to our strength as a union by spending the bulk of our time supporting local struggles. We have expanded the summer member organizing program and hired 16 new full-time field staff and bargaining campaign specialists. We are in the midst of transforming our communications, research, and professional learning divisions. Internally, we have embarked on learning and reflection designed to make the MTA into an antiracist union.

At the statewide level, we were proud to lead the Fund Our Future campaign, which won the largest and most progressive reinvestment in public preK-12 education in a generation with the unanimous passage of the *Student Opportunity Act*. We reversed the prohibition against bilingual education, passed the Freedom to Join bill to ameliorate the worst impacts of the *Janus* decision, and brought the Fair Share Amendment from the Legislature to the ballot. This spring we are pushing hard for higher education funding, adjunct justice, and debt-free higher education for new educators, as well as policies and funds for diversifying our education workforce. We also have been dedicated allies to groups fighting for affordable housing, climate justice, and immigrant rights. During the pandemic, we have defended the right of educators to

protect themselves and their families' health and we have advocated for coherent, science-based guidelines and safety measures for schools and colleges.

The pandemic has laid bare — and made worse — so many inequalities in the Commonwealth. The pandemic has challenged me, as it should challenge all of us, to raise our expectations about what we in the MTA can achieve.

In the coming years, with Deb McCarthy as my Vice President, I know we can continue our progress toward the more just public schools and colleges our communities deserve by building a more powerful statewide union and almost 400 more powerful locals, and by fighting injustice in its many forms.

### The union we want to build

- Develops powerful locals with strong rank-and-file leadership.
- Encourages and supports locals as they engage in open bargaining.
- Establishes regional coordinated bargaining teams to build member power across regions and win stronger contracts.
- Challenges members to engage in reflection and struggle around racial and economic injustice.
- Removes discriminatory barriers to becoming educators, defends antiracist curriculum and pedagogy, and recruits and supports educators of color.
- Demands autonomy and respect for all education workers, including



control of the curriculum, an end to punitive evaluation systems, and workplace democracy.

### Fighting for justice to win

- The Fair Share Amendment to fully fund public schools and colleges.
- Debt-free public college education for working-class students and educators.
- An end to MCAS and the test-based accountability regime.
- The right to strike for all workers.
- The ESP Bill of Rights, including living wages for all ESPs.
- Pay parity, job security, health insurance, and pensions for adjunct faculty members.
- Safe, green, and healthy public school and college buildings.

As writer and activist Naomi Klein argued in *The Shock Doctrine*, the forces of the right wing are skilled at exploiting a crisis to implement policies that expand wealth and power for elites. In the wake of the pandemic, they see new opportunities for undermining educators and our unions. But we, too, can use this crisis to imagine our vision for public education, and for our world.

Our union — the largest union in New England — represents some of the most respected and trusted people in every city and town and on every campus in Massachusetts. We must put forward and struggle for our vision of public education. A better world is possible. We in the MTA have the opportunity, and the obligation, to lead the way.

## Candidate for MTA Vice President: Donna Grady

**I am part of a union family.** It's in my blood. My mom was a union steward for the nurses at Boston City Hospital. My grandfather was a union steward for the Boston firefighters. My uncle served as a union steward for the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers. Unionism and activism are in my DNA. They are an important part of who I am and what I believe.

As a local leader, **I have been involved in the Franklin Education Association for over 20 years.** I have served our members as a building rep, secretary, negotiations chair, grievance chair, vice president and now president of our large local association. Along with my team, I have crafted many budgets, written contract language and settled several contracts for all of my units, recruited members to strengthen our association, mentored new presidents, and trained representatives on what unionism is and looks like. Upon the arrival of the "new" evaluation system, I trained superintendents across the state about its true purpose and use.

Currently, I am serving my second term on the MTA Board of Directors. In this role, I exercise my judgment and voice to advocate for the needs of our members across the state. **Whether it be budgets, expenditures, policies or procedures, I challenge the status quo to ensure that you are benefiting from your investment with the Massachusetts Teachers Association.**

In addition to my Board responsibilities, I represent you on the Member Materials Committee and Electoral Review Committee, and I serve as Chair of the Southeast Massachusetts Education Action Network. Also, I serve on a national task force that researches developmentally appropriate curriculum and play for young learners. In each endeavor, I work on your behalf and in accordance with your expectations as MTA members.

The Massachusetts Teachers Association mission statement speaks to being a member-driven organization with democratic principles, acceptance and

support of professionalism and unionism, and utilizing the power of collective bargaining. We must address social justice issues and advocate for respect and dignity within our association and communities. **My goal as your next MTA Vice President will be to fulfill our mission statement for ALL MTA members and staff,** not just a select few. We have a large number of underrepresented members who deserve to have their voices listened to and heard.

My bottom line is this: The MTA has to become a "user-friendly" association. There are 115,000 members, many of whom are disenfranchised and disappointed as the current officers are disconnected from what our members need or want. A great first step in making MTA member-focused is to ASK and LISTEN to members. **As your next MTA Vice President, I am determined to build new relationships by extending my hands, lending my ears and using my voice to impact the direction of the Massachusetts Teachers Association.** I am Donna Grady and I ask for your vote on Saturday, May 21. I appreciate your support and all that you continue to do for our union.



## Candidate for MTA Vice President: Deb McCarthy

**W**hen I am elected as the vice president of the MTA, along with Max Page as president, you will have a leadership team in "Max and Deb" that fights for justice and wins with union power. I am the daughter of an educator. She was widowed at 44 with five children to raise. I know why all educators have a right to work one job with professional pay. My sister was one of the plaintiffs in the Hull teacher evaluation case that won the right to due process for educators without professional status. I saw up close why challenging a demoralizing, punitive evaluation system is critical for educator autonomy and our professional rights as education workers.

I've watched my daughter, a middle school math teacher, and her wife parent their 1-year-old daughter and seen that health care, child care and FMLA language are gender rights that demand justice in our workplace. When my daughter-in-law, an elementary school educator, faced job insecurity directly related to her three maternity leaves, it became crystal clear that parenting rights and maternity benefits at the worksite are a fundamental justice. These experiences and 25 years in the classroom have led me to these commitments: the dismantling of a racist high-stakes testing system; winning full funding for all of public education; and creating racial, social, gender and economic justice for the schools all students deserve. As your vice president, I will fight injustice with our union power.

In my 22 years as a local leader, I've learned that when we fight, we win. But our local was transformed by two actions. After bargaining two contracts in the open and creating a shared governance model with leadership from the elementary, middle and high school levels, we realized our full union power. Now instead of asking what the union is doing for me, members ask what it is that we can do as the union to better our working conditions and our professional rights. When I formed the South Shore Education Justice Alliance,

we extended our power from the workplace into the community by creating relationships around our hopes and visions for a just world. Working with parents and community members, SSEJA has effectively addressed issues around mold, extreme heat indexes and smaller class sizes while engaging the community in the No On 2, *Student Opportunity Act* and Fair Share campaigns.

We have the opportunity to create an historic redistribution of wealth and power when we pass the Fair Share Amendment in November. This investment in educational justice will serve the betterment of the collective good. Max and I are the leaders with the capacity and the commitment to create this historic systemic change.

When you vote for Max and Deb on May 21, you will be voting for the schools and the communities that all students deserve, you will be voting for investment in a member-driven, rank-and-file union, and you will be voting for the power to create the just working conditions all education workers deserve.



## Biographical statements of candidates for Board of Directors

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

DISTRICT 12F

### Rachel Flaherty, Tyngsborough

As a member of the Board of Directors, I will promote the interests and needs of District 12F members through democracy and transparency. It is my belief that an informed and engaged membership is necessary to create a stronger and more successful union; and that is my goal.



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

DISTRICT 12F

### Adam Snodgrass, Groton-Dunstable

MTA Board members work with others to form a shared understanding of our challenges to build a unified response as an organization. This isn't easy given the complex challenges we face and our diverse work and life experiences. I'd like to continue this work, so I ask for your vote.



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

DISTRICT 17G

### Amy Morin, Lexington

Amy Morin, running for 17G. I am the first ESP to serve as Vice President for the Lexington Education Association. I sit on different MTA committees and have been an NEA-RA/Annual Meeting delegate and facilitated different MTA working groups. Vote for me and bring a unique perspective to the Board!



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

DISTRICT 17G

### Julia Norman, Waltham

MTA needs Board members who show up and speak up for members and students. I've been that person for two decades, serving on the New Member Committee, PR/Organizing Committee, Candidate Recommendation Committee and as a Political Action Leader. Thanks for your vote and the opportunity to continue this work.



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

DISTRICT 48H

### Jackie Bishop, University Staff Association

This is the time for innovative, bold and sure leadership. I have the experience and enthusiasm to be effective, and I truly value the efforts and voices of all members in our district. I would be grateful to represent you on the Board of Directors and honored to serve.



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

DISTRICT 48H

### Dora Ramos, University Staff Association

I'm Dora Ramos. I have been involved with MTA/USA in different facets throughout many years. I have served on the Executive Board and Stewards Council and as General Secretary, and I've represented you at the state and national levels. I welcome the opportunity to be a voice again.

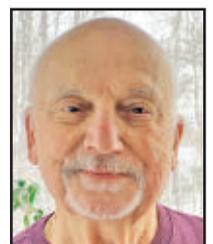


BOARD OF DIRECTORS

STATEWIDE RETIRED DISTRICT

### Kip Fonsh, MTA Retired

I am running for the retired members seat on the MTA Board of Directors to support progressive policies of the MTA that protect, preserve and enhance the rights and benefits of public school and higher education educators, staff and retirees in the Commonwealth.



## Biographical statements of candidates for Board of Directors

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

### STATEWIDE RETIRED DISTRICT

#### Joe Herosy, MTA Retired

As a Board member, I will support MTA policies that build grassroots power. We need to win in our locals and on Beacon Hill with progressive legislation. I will serve as a conduit from rank-and-file members to the Board as we unite to pass the Fair Share Amendment.



### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

### STATEWIDE RETIRED DISTRICT

#### Bonnie Page, MTA Retired

Please vote for me to represent ALL retired members on the MTA Board. You need someone who is knowledgeable, experienced, and passionate about our issues. I have been involved in my local, Malden, and the state and national unions for the last 35 years. Vote for a genuine unionist.



## Amendments to resolutions are recommended

**M**TA Resolutions are the association's statements of principle on issues relating to members, public education, the welfare of students, and human and civil rights.

Resolutions may be submitted by any member to the Resolutions Committee by the second Friday in January. The committee may also propose resolutions.

All resolutions submitted are considered by the committee, and those approved by a majority vote of the committee are recommended to the Annual Meeting delegates after having been presented to the Board of Directors. To become an official position of the MTA, a resolution must be adopted by the delegates at the Annual Meeting.

As a result of a change to the MTA Standing Rules that was approved in 2021, proposed resolutions may no longer be submitted for the first time at the Annual Meeting of Delegates.

The proposed revisions printed in this edition of *MTA Today* have been recommended by the Resolutions Committee. The Board voted on Saturday, March 19, to recommend passage by the delegates.

A section that is underlined in the resolutions on this page is a proposed addition.

All current resolutions are posted on the MTA website. To review the resolutions and MTA Bylaws, please visit [massteacher.org/resolutions](http://massteacher.org/resolutions).

### Proposed revised Resolution C-6 Healthy and Safe Schools

The Massachusetts Teachers Association believes that staff and students deserve to be in a healthy and safe learning environment. The MTA believes that measures should be taken to guarantee that physical conditions of buildings are maintained so as to conform to the highest possible standards for health and safety, in full compliance with all building codes and safety regulations of the state.

The MTA urges that school committees and boards of trustees must improve school mechanical ventilation systems to assure that school spaces' air quality is sufficient to diminish as much as possible the risk of airborne infections from indoor pathogens from any source (viral, bacterial and molds), and bring them in line with best practices and current scientific recommendations. As of 2022, this would require mechanical ventilation systems (Heating Ventilation and Air Conditioning, HVAC), which must be mechanically driven from Air Handling Units (AHU), that provide a supply of clean outside air. At least five air changes per hour (5 ACH) must be achieved in each school space. The outside air could be complemented by recycled air filtered through at least MERV 13-rated filters to achieve the minimum 5 ACH. Appropriate exhaust flows out of each school space must be balanced with the supply of air into the rooms. Portable HEPA ventilation units could also be provided to complement and maximize air cleansing.

The MTA recommends that contract bargaining language require formation of Health and Safety Committees composed of school personnel, parents, and school committee members and that they have regularly scheduled meetings designated to improve the health and safety of the school environment.

The MTA further urges that school committees provide for safe usage, proper storage and transfer and disposal of all toxic and/or hazardous substances used in school buildings and on school grounds.

The MTA strongly supports the enforcement of the Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSHA) on behalf of all employees in the public sector.

The MTA believes that all educational facilities must be safe from all environmental and chemical hazards, including lead from water pipe systems within schools, inadequate ventilation and climate control, particulate pollution, mold and sick-building syndrome.

The MTA urges that dangerous asbestos be removed immediately from the schools and that the Commonwealth provide funds for its removal and other related expenses.

The MTA also strongly supports the state's school immunization requirements. These requirements exist to protect students, staff and members of the wider community from serious diseases that can be prevented by vaccines. (75, 77, 79, 82, 84, 85, 88, 01, 03, 07, 19, 22)

### Proposed revised Resolution C-7 School Facilities: Design, Construction and Function

The Massachusetts Teachers Association believes that school facilities must be conducive to teaching and learning. The physical environment must allow for a variety of needs, including the number of students, physical characteristics of students, changes in teaching methods, presentation of instruction, and an increased use of school facilities. The MTA also believes that all school facilities must be well constructed, safe, energy-efficient, aesthetically pleasing, accessible, functional and adaptable to persons with disabilities.

The MTA supports ecologically conservative facility designs including heating, ventilation and air conditioning systems.

The MTA believes that the community, parents/guardians and education employees should play an advisory role in designing these facilities.

The MTA also believes that stable and sufficient funding must be provided for the design, construction, maintenance and operation of the school facility.

The MTA believes that one of the most essential means for preventing the risk of airborne infections to students and educators (viral, bacterial and molds) is a well-designed mechanical ventilation system that is in line with best practices and current scientific recommendations. As of 2022, this would require a system that provides for at least five air changes per hour (5 ACH) based on outside clean air. Well-tempered outdoor supply air should be designed for every school indoor space. Temperature and relative humidity extremes should be avoided — by design — in new schools while conforming with at least 5 ACH ventilation rates as a design criterion, as described in MTA Resolution C-6, Healthy and Safe Schools.

These principles should apply equally to preK-12 schools and buildings used by public higher education institutions. (11, 22)

## Amendments to bylaws are proposed

*The following is Proposed Bylaw Amendment #1. It would revise Article VI, Governance: Executive Committee & Board of Directors, Section 2. Board of Directors, Subsection B, Duties; and Article IX, Delegate Meetings, Section 2. Delegates, Subsection B, Allocation. The present text is in the left column. Proposed revisions are indicated by underlined text in the right column.*

Article VI, Governance: Executive Committee & Board Of Directors, Section 2. Board of Directors

Subsection B, Duties

It shall be the duty of the board to:

15. Establish the procedures for the election of regional ethnic minority delegates to the Annual Meeting of Delegates.

Article IX, Delegate Meetings: Section 2. Delegates

Subsection B, Allocation

2. Each region shall be entitled to ethnic minority representation of delegates equal to the number of district directors from that region. No more than one delegate from each district within a region shall be elected to fulfill this allocation.

Article VI, Governance: Executive Committee & Board Of Directors, Section 2. Board of Directors

Subsection B, Duties

It shall be the duty of the board to:

15. Establish the procedures for the election of regional and Statewide Retired Electoral District ethnic minority delegates to the Annual Meeting of Delegates.

Article IX, Delegate Meetings: Section 2. Delegates

Subsection B, Allocation

2. Each region and the Statewide Retired Electoral District shall be entitled to ethnic minority representation of delegates equal to the number of district directors from that region. No more than one delegate from each district within a region shall be elected to fulfill this allocation.

**Impact Statement**

This proposal would establish an entitlement of two (2) ethnic minority delegate seats to the Annual Meeting for the Retired membership and would direct the Board of Directors to establish procedures for electing said delegates.

**Submitted by:**

MTA Retired Members Committee: Patrick Patterson, chair, Nancy Aykanian, Mary Cowhey, Seth Evans, Kip Fonsh, Jackie Gorrie, Andrei Joseph, Dale Melcher, Rafael Moure-Eraso, Phyllis Neufeld, Bonnie Page, Jen Silva, Robin Smith and Anne Wass

**Bylaws and Rules Committee:**

Recommends Adoption (6-0)

**Board of Directors:**

Recommends Adoption (43-0)

*The following is Proposed Bylaw Amendment #2. It would revise Article IV, Finance, Section 2. Dues. The present text is in the left column. Proposed revisions are indicated by underlined text in the right column.*

Article IV, Finance, Section 2. Dues

Current language remains.

Article IV, Finance, Section 2. Dues

Keep existing language and add a new Subsection H to the end:

H. Honor Members

Past MTA Presidents and Vice Presidents shall have their MTA and NEA dues paid by the MTA. If Life Memberships are available, the MTA will pay for their Life Memberships.

**Impact Statement**

This proposal would require that the MTA pay for the MTA and NEA dues for life for all past presidents and vice presidents of the MTA.

**Submitted by:**

Bill Forster, Retired

**Bylaws and Rules Committee:**

Recommends Rejection (6-0)

**Board of Directors:**

Recommends Rejection (54-0)

*The following is Proposed Bylaw Amendment #3. It would revise Article IX, Delegate Meetings, Section 2. Delegates, Subsection B, Allocation. The present text is in the left column. Proposed revisions are indicated by underlined text in the right column.*

Article IX, Delegate Meetings, Section 2. Delegates

Subsection B, Allocation

1. Each local affiliate and the Statewide Retired Electoral District shall be entitled to two delegates and one additional delegate for every fifty members over fifty, or major fraction thereof.

2. Each region shall be entitled to ethnic minority representation of delegates equal to the number of district directors from that region. No more than one delegate from each district within a region shall be elected to fulfill this allocation.

3. Each state and county affiliate shall be entitled to two delegates, provided that such affiliates require MTA membership where such membership is available.

4. Members of the Board of Directors shall be delegates.

5. The Electoral Review Committee shall determine the delegate allocation for locals affiliated after the membership cutoff date.

6. Each affiliated chapter of the Student Education Association of Massachusetts (SEAM) shall be entitled to two delegates.

Article IX, Delegate Meetings, Section 2. Delegates

Subsection B, Allocation

1. Each local affiliate and the Statewide Retired Electoral District shall be entitled to two delegates and one additional delegate for every fifty members over fifty, or major fraction thereof.

2. Each region shall be entitled to ethnic minority representation of delegates equal to the number of district directors from that region. No more than one delegate from each district within a region shall be elected to fulfill this allocation.

3. Each state and county affiliate shall be entitled to two delegates, provided that such affiliates require MTA membership where such membership is available.

4. Members of the Board of Directors shall be delegates.

5. The Electoral Review Committee shall determine the delegate allocation for locals affiliated after the membership cutoff date.

6. Each affiliated chapter of the Student Education Association of Massachusetts (SEAM) shall be entitled to two delegates.

7. Past MTA Presidents and Vice Presidents shall be entitled to be "Honor Delegates" and shall have full voting and participating rights at the Annual Meeting. They shall not have to stand for election to the Annual Meeting. They will vote with their last local.

**Impact Statement**

This proposal would grant automatic lifetime Annual Meeting delegate status with full voting rights for all past presidents and vice presidents of the MTA.

**Submitted by:**

Bill Forster, Retired

**Bylaws and Rules Committee:**

Recommends Rejection (6-0)

**Board of Directors:**

Recommends Rejection (53-1)

### Candidates for MTA Retired Members Committee

*Four vacancies for two-year terms commencing July 1*

The election will be held at the 2022 Annual Meeting of Delegates. The delegates representing the Statewide Retired District will vote in the Retired Members Committee election. Candidates are listed in ballot order. Their biographical statements were printed in the *MTA Reporter*.

Patrick Patterson

Beverly Saccocia

Rick Last

Lois Powers

Ora Gladstone

Kathy Greeley

## Amendments to bylaws are proposed

*The following is Proposed Bylaw Amendment #4. It would revise Article VI, Section 1. Executive Committee, C. Meetings. The present text is in the left column. Proposed revisions are indicated by underlined text in the right column.*

Article VI, Section 1. Executive Committee,  
C. Meetings

1. Frequency

The Executive Committee shall meet prior to all regular meetings of the Board and/or upon the call of the President or a majority of its members.

Article VI, Section 1. Executive Committee,  
C. Meetings

1. Frequency

The Executive Committee shall meet prior to all regular meetings of the Board and/or upon the call of the President or a majority of its members. Meetings can be held virtually or hybrid — with participation virtual and in person — by electronic means using media conferencing technology, as determined by the President in consultation with the body.

**Impact Statement**

The current language is silent regarding the methods for holding Executive Committee meetings. This proposal would allow for Executive Committee meetings to be held virtually, hybrid, or in person.

**Submitted by:**

MTA Executive Committee

**Bylaws and Rules Committee:**

Recommends Adoption (6-0)

**Board of Directors:**

Recommends Adoption (48-3)

*The following is Proposed Bylaw Amendment #5. It would revise ARTICLE VI, Section 2. Board of Directors, C. Meetings. The present text is in the left column. Proposed revisions are indicated by underlined text and strikethroughs in the right column.*

ARTICLE VI, Section 2. Board of Directors  
C. Meetings

1. Frequency

a. Regular meetings of the Board shall be held a minimum of four times a year.

b. Special meetings of the Board may be called either by the President or upon the written request of ten members of the Board to the Executive Director-Treasurer stating the reason for the meeting.

Notice of a special meeting shall be sent at least one week prior to the date fixed for such meeting and shall state the time, place and business for which it is called.

No business shall be transacted at a special meeting except that specified in the notice.

c. All meetings of the Board shall be held within the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

d. A special meeting called pursuant to section 2.C(1)(b) of this Article may be conducted by media conference technology. The decision to conduct a special meeting by electronic means shall be made by

ARTICLE VI, Section 2. Board of Directors  
C. Meetings

1. Frequency

a. Regular meetings of the Board shall be held a minimum of four times a year.

b. Special meetings of the Board may be called either by the President or upon the written request of ten members of the Board to the Executive Director-Treasurer stating the reason for the meeting.

Notice of a special meeting shall be sent at least one week prior to the date fixed for such meeting and shall state the time, place and business for which it is called.

No business shall be transacted at a special meeting except that specified in the notice.

c. All meetings of the Board shall be held within the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. In the event of a public health crisis or other emergency, meetings can be held virtually or hybrid — with participation virtual and in person — by electronic means using media conferencing technology, as determined by the President in consultation with the body.

*Continued in following columns*

*Proposed Bylaw Amendment #5 — continued from previous columns*

the President. Voting at a meeting that is conducted by electronic means is permissible and shall have the same status as votes conducted at a live meeting.

d. A special meeting called pursuant to section 2.C(1)(b) of this Article may be conducted virtually or hybrid by electronic means using by media conference technology. The decision to conduct a special meeting by electronic means shall be made by the President.

e. Voting at a meetings that is are conducted by electronic means is permissible and shall have the same status as votes conducted at a live meeting.

**Impact Statement**

The current language simply states the Board meetings must be held in Massachusetts. During a public health crisis or other emergency, this proposal would allow Board meetings to be held virtually, hybrid, or in person.

**Submitted by:**

MTA Executive Committee

**Bylaws and Rules Committee:**

Recommends Adoption (6-0)

**Board of Directors:**

Recommends Adoption (50-2)

*The following is Proposed Bylaw Amendment #6. It would revise Article IV: Finance, Section 2, Dues, Subsection A. Active Members. The present text is in the left column. Proposed revisions are indicated by underlined text in the right column.*

Article IV, Finance, Section 2, Dues

Subsection A. Active Members

Language to be added after item 8.

Article IV, Finance, Section 2, Dues

Subsection A. Active Members

9. Local Affiliate Variance of Per-Member Dues

At its discretion, a local affiliate may charge individual active members an annual MTA dues rate that differs from those described above; this variance does not apply to NEA dues. The total dues remitted by a local affiliate must be the same whether individual members are assessed flat or variable MTA dues.

**Impact Statement**

This proposal would give locals the flexibility to allocate MTA dues payments among their membership in accordance with a schedule set locally. There would be no change in MTA's revenue, as the total amount of MTA dues owed by each local would not change. NEA dues and the schedule for NEA member payments would not be affected.

**Submitted by:**

Progressive Dues Task Force: Annetta Argyres and David Gross, co-chairs, Leslie Marsland, Dan Monahan, Katie Schmitt and Heike Tuplin

**Bylaws and Rules Committee:**

Recommends Adoption (6-0)

**Board of Directors**

Recommends Adoption (46-8)

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## Amendments to standing rules are proposed

*The following is Proposed Amendment #1 to the MTA Standing Rules. It would revise Rule 6, Order Of Business And Debate, Section 11, New Business Items. The present text is in the left column. Proposed revisions are indicated by underlined text and strikethroughs in the right column.*

Rule 6, Order of Business and Debate

Section 11.

New Business Items

a. No later than 4 p.m. on the first meeting day, the delegates shall commence consideration of any new business items submitted to the President by 5 p.m. on the Monday prior to the Meeting of Delegates.

b. New business items with budgetary implications must be submitted to the Presiding Officer prior to the conclusion of business on the first meeting day and shall be considered by the delegates before the budget is adopted.

c. Other new business items shall be submitted to the Presiding Officer prior to the end of the first hour of the business session of the second day of a Meeting of Delegates and shall be considered throughout the meeting at times determined by the Presiding Officer.

d. New business items not acted upon or referred prior to the adjournment of the Meeting of Delegates will expire.

Rule 6, Order of Business and Debate

Section 11.

New Business Items

a. No later than 4 p.m. on the first meeting day, the delegates shall commence consideration of any new business items submitted to the President by 5 p.m. on the Monday prior to the Meeting of Delegates.

b. New business items with budgetary implications must be submitted to the Presiding Officer by 5 p.m. on the Monday prior to the Meeting of Delegates ~~prior to the conclusion of business on the first meeting day~~ and shall be considered by the delegates before the budget is adopted.

c. Other new business items shall be submitted to the Presiding Officer prior to the end of the first hour of the business session of the second day of a Meeting of Delegates and shall be considered throughout the meeting at times determined by the Presiding Officer.

d. New business items not acted upon or referred prior to the adjournment of the Meeting of Delegates will expire.

**Impact Statement**  
The current rules set the deadline for new business items with budgetary implications as prior to the end of business on the first day of the Annual Meeting. This proposal would change that deadline to 5 p.m. on the Monday prior to the Annual Meeting.

**Submitted by:**  
MTA Executive Committee

**Bylaws and Rules Committee:**  
Recommends Adoption (4-2)

**Board of Directors:**  
Recommends Rejection (54-0)

*The following is Proposed Amendment #2 to the MTA Standing Rules. It would revise Rule 6, Order Of Business And Debate, Section 11, New Business Items. The present text is in the left column. Proposed revisions are indicated by underlined text and strikethroughs in the right column.*

Rule 6, Order of Business and Debate

Section 11.

New Business Items

a. No later than 4 p.m. on the first meeting day, the delegates shall commence consideration of any new business items submitted to the President by 5 p.m. on the Monday prior to the Meeting of Delegates.

b. New business items with budgetary implications must be submitted to the Presiding Officer prior to the

Rule 6, Order of Business and Debate

Section 11.

New Business Items

a. No later than 4 p.m. on the first meeting day, the delegates shall commence consideration of any new business items submitted to the President by 5 p.m. on the Monday prior to the Meeting of Delegates.

b. New business items with budgetary implications must be submitted to the Presiding Officer prior to the

*Continued in following columns*

*Proposed Standing Rule Amendment #2 — continued from previous columns*

conclusion of business on the first meeting day and shall be considered by the delegates before the budget is adopted.

c. Other new business items shall be submitted to the Presiding Officer prior to the end of the first hour of the business session of the second day of a Meeting of Delegates and shall be considered throughout the meeting at times determined by the Presiding Officer.

d. New business items not acted upon or referred prior to the adjournment of the Meeting of Delegates will expire.

conclusion of business on the first meeting day and shall be considered by the delegates before the budget is adopted.

c. New business items that have a policy implication must be submitted to the Presiding Officer by 5 p.m. on the Monday prior to the Meeting of Delegates and shall be considered throughout the meeting at times determined by the Presiding Officer.

e. d. Other new business items shall be submitted to the Presiding Officer prior to the end of the first hour of the business session of the second day of a Meeting of Delegates and shall be considered throughout the meeting at times determined by the Presiding Officer.

d. e. New business items not acted upon or referred prior to the adjournment of the Meeting of Delegates will expire.

**Impact Statement**  
The current rules set the deadline for all new business items without budgetary implications as prior to the first hour on the second day of the Annual Meeting. This proposal would add language requiring that new business items with policy implications would be due by 5 p.m. on the Monday prior to the Annual Meeting.

**Submitted by:**  
MTA Executive Committee

**Bylaws and Rules Committee:**  
Recommends Adoption (6-0)

**Board of Directors:**  
Recommends Adoption (36-19)

*The following is Proposed Amendment #3 to the MTA Standing Rules. It would revise Rule 6: Order of Business and Debate, Section 11. The present text is in the left column. Proposed revisions are indicated by underlined text and strikethroughs in the right column.*

Rule 6, Order of Business and Debate

Section 3.

The first item of business on the second meeting day shall be the presentation of awards. The second item of business on the second meeting day shall be new business items with budgetary implications. The next item of business on the second meeting day shall be the budget.

(Sections 4-10 are unchanged.)

Section 11. New Business Items

a. No later than 4 p.m. on the first meeting day, the delegates shall commence consideration of any new business items submitted to the President by 5 p.m. on the Monday prior to the Meeting of Delegates.

b. New business items with budgetary implications

Rule 6, Order of Business and Debate

Section 3.

The first item of business on the second meeting day shall be the presentation of awards. The second item of business on the second meeting day shall be new business items with budgetary implications. The next item of business on the second meeting day shall be the budget.

(Sections 4-10 are unchanged.)

Section 11. New Business Items

a. New business items without budgetary implications that have been submitted before Annual Meeting shall be followed by other new business items and prior to resolutions.

a. b. No later than 4 p.m. on the first meeting day, the

*Continued on next page*



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## Amendments to standing rules are proposed

*Proposed Standing Rule Amendment #3 — continued from previous page*

must be submitted to the Presiding Officer prior to the conclusion of business on the first meeting day and shall be considered by the delegates before the budget is adopted.

c. Other new business items shall be submitted to the Presiding Officer prior to the end of the first hour of the business session of the second day of a Meeting of Delegates and shall be considered throughout the meeting at times determined by the Presiding Officer.

d. New business items not acted upon or referred prior to the adjournment of the Meeting of Delegates will expire.

delegates shall commence consideration of any new business items submitted to the President by 5 p.m. on the Monday prior to the Meeting of Delegates.

b: c. New business items with budgetary implications must be submitted to the Presiding Officer prior to the conclusion of business on the first meeting day and shall be considered by the delegates before the budget is adopted.

c: d. Other new business items shall be submitted to the Presiding Officer prior to the end of the first hour of the business session of the second day of a Meeting of Delegates and shall be considered throughout the meeting at times determined by the Presiding Officer.

d: e. New business items not acted upon or referred prior to the adjournment of the Meeting of Delegates will expire.

### Impact Statement

This proposal would require that all new business items without budgetary implications be considered by the delegates prior to, though not necessarily immediately prior to, resolutions.

### Submitted by:

Richard Levy, Retired, and Craig Slatin, Retired

### Bylaws and Rules Committee:

Recommends Adoption (6-0)

### Board of Directors:

Recommends Adoption (48-3)

## Alternative nomination process for officer elections and special rules for the 2022 MTA Annual Meeting

The MTA Bylaws provide for an alternative nomination process for President and Vice President at the Annual Meeting of Delegates. The bylaws allow for the collection of 200 signatures among the registered delegates on Friday, when the first day of the meeting takes place. Upon certification of the signatures collected, the name of the candidate, or names of candidates, will be placed on the ballot for the election on Saturday. Given the unique format of the 2022 Annual Meeting, the exact process and procedures for this alternative nomination process remained under review as *MTA Today* went to press.

In addition, due to the complexity of the upcoming Annual Meeting and the three ways in which delegates can participate, special rules for the meeting will need to be adopted. The Bylaws and Rules Committee, working with the MTA parliamentarian, was expected to recommend draft rules to the MTA Board of Directors in late April. Special rules recommended for adoption by Annual Meeting delegates, as well as updates on the procedures for alternative nominations, will be posted on the MTA website at [massteacher.org/annualmeeting](https://massteacher.org/annualmeeting).

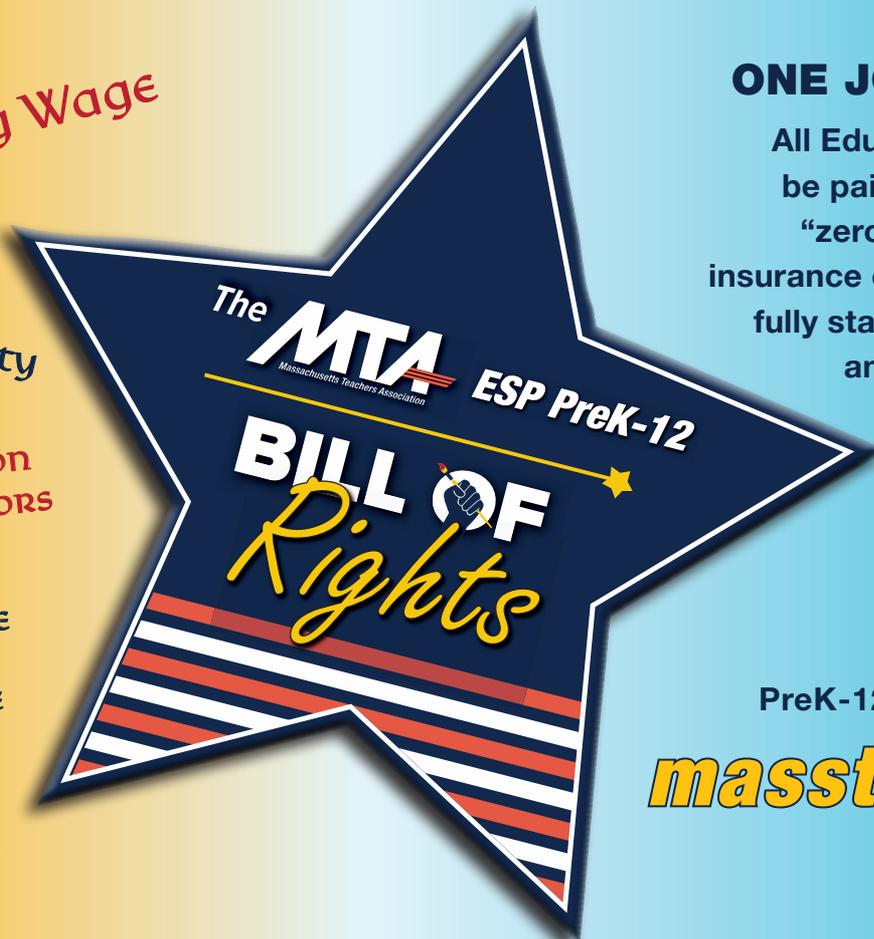
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# Candidates vie for posts at MTA Annual Meeting of Delegates

By Mary MacDonald

The contests for MTA President and Vice President, positions on the Board of Directors and seats on the Retired Members Committee will be decided at the upcoming Annual Meeting of Delegates.

Statements by candidates for MTA President — Erik J. Champy, Lamikco “Meka” Magee and Max Page — appear on Page 20, Page 21 and Page 22. Statements by candidates for Vice President — Donna Grady and Deb McCarthy — are on Page 23. Statements by candidates in races for contested Board seats are on Pages 24 and 25, and information on the Retired Members Committee contest is on Page 26. In all cases, statements are printed in ballot order.

The contested races for Board seats are as follows: Rachel Flaherty of the Tyngsborough Teachers’ Association and Adam Snodgrass of the Groton-Dunstable Educators Association are competing in District 12F; Amy Morin of the Lexington Education Association and Julia Norman of the Waltham Educators Association are competing in District 17G; Jackie Bishop of the University Staff Association at UMass Amherst and Dora Ramos of the University Staff Association at UMass Amherst are competing in District 48H; and MTA Retired members Kip Fonsh, Joe Herosy, and Bonnie Page are competing for two seats available for Statewide Retired seats.

Six candidates are vying for four seats on the MTA Retired Members Committee. They are Patrick Patterson, Rick Last, Ora Gladstone, Beverly Saccocia, Lois Powers and Kathy Greeley.

All other candidates for the Executive Committee and the Board have been declared elected under the election waiver in the MTA Bylaws. The provision



states that if there is only one candidate for an open position, the election will be waived and the candidate is declared elected. Terms on the Board and Executive Committee begin on July 1 and last for three years. The candidates declared elected because of the waiver are as follows:

**Executive Committee**

**Region D:** Jessica Wender-Shubow, Brookline Educators Union

**Region E:** Cynthia Roy, Bristol-Plymouth Teachers Association

**Region H:** Maria Hegbloom, Massachusetts State College Association

**Board of Directors**

**District 10B:** Tina Mansfield, Educational Association of Worcester

**District 33C:** June M.K. Gustafson, Hingham Education Association

**District 41C:** Brian Fitzgerald, Wareham Education Association

**District 29D:** Kyle Gekopi, Wellesley Educators Association

**District 40E:** Christopher Saulnier, Acushnet Teachers Association

**District 16G:** Diana Marcus, Burlington Educators’ Association

**District 20G:** Kimberly Auger, Everett Teachers Association

**District 45H:** Luis Rosero, Massachusetts State College Association

**District 49H:** Anneta Argyres, Professional Staff Union

*Candidates who have been declared elected who provided photos are pictured with this article. Photos of candidates in contested races appear with their biographical statements if they were provided by the candidates.*



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**MTA**

# TTA president's advice: 'Listen to your members'

Continued from Page 9

BEU President Jessica Wender-Shubow said that a sense of militancy among members about winning a fair contract is growing as the School Committee grows more dismissive of their concerns.

"We are seeing anti-union attitudes like we never have before," Wender-Shubow said. "They tell us they can't use federal pandemic relief funds for our contracts because they can't predict future labor costs. Well, they predict future costs for everything else. Why can't they predict and plan for school labor costs?"

In planning its next steps, the BEU Executive Board met with Tewksbury Teachers Association President Conner Bourgoin.

The TTA escalated actions through a long campaign, adopting work-to-rule actions in November and appearing at School Committee meetings before persuading the district to actively participate in negotiations rather than rely on state mediation to address local issues.

The Tewksbury local notched a victory when members ratified a contract in March. Bourgoin said that communication among members and the community was instrumental in their successful organizing efforts.

"The two keys to winning a fair contract are democracy and transparency," Bourgoin said. "When every important decision you make at the



Numerous members of the Tewksbury Teachers Association joined TTA President Conner Bourgoin, center, for a standout at the town center in November. In March, members of the local ratified a new contract after a long campaign that sparked a great deal of activism.

Photo by Jonathan Ng

table has been communicated to and approved by your membership, that's when the members will realize what they are asking for is not anything unreasonable. If your members feel heard and communicated with, that's when the organizing becomes possible."

In February, TTA educators, alongside other labor allies and Tewksbury residents, held a standout at the high school before addressing the School

Committee. In the following days, high school students led a walkout in solidarity with educators.

Getting a pulse of the membership is critical when planning organizing actions, Bourgoin noted.

"Listen to your members," he said. "Officers should never be the ones to demand an action happen if the members are not comfortable with it. A true democratic union is an organized union that is ready to fight."

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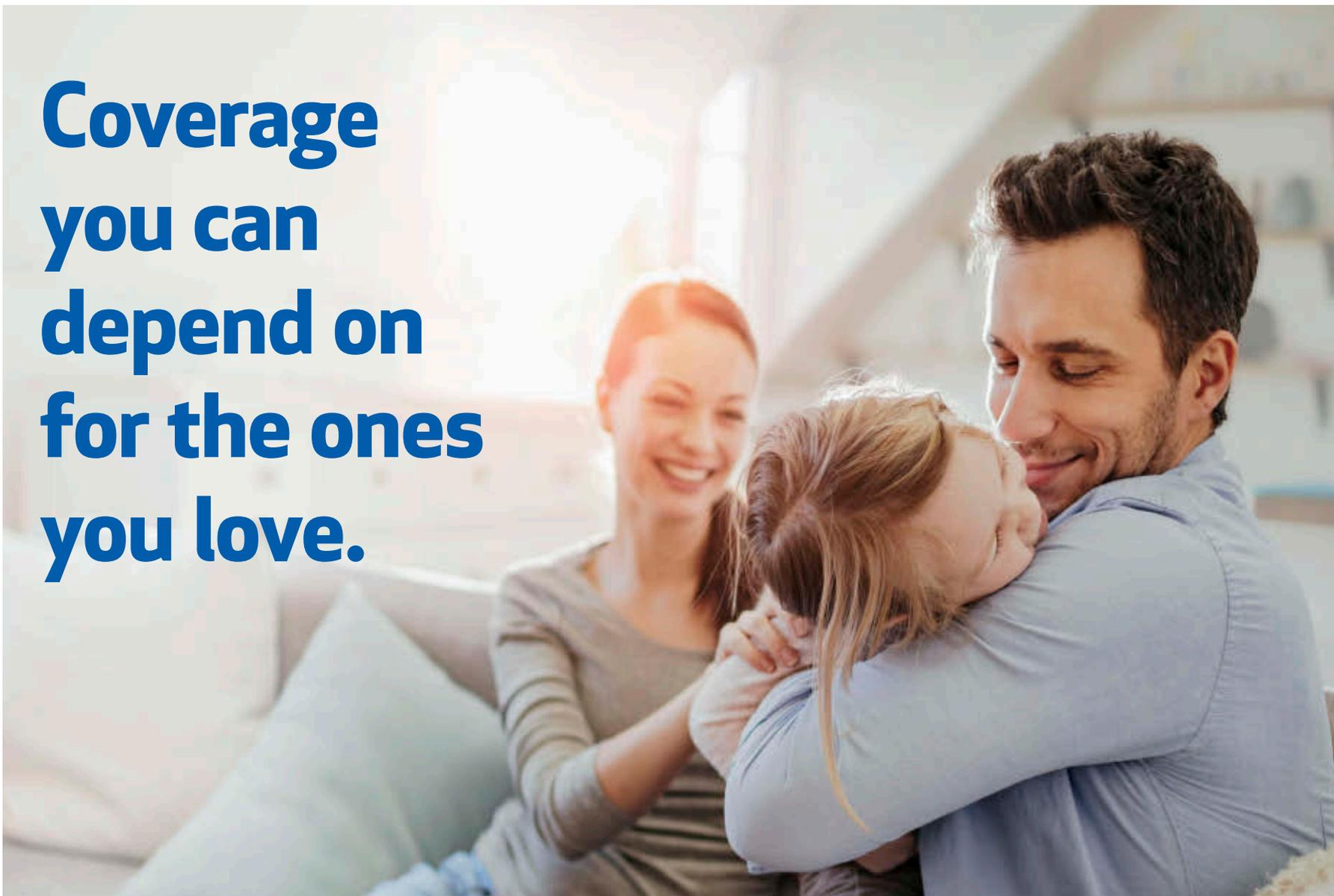
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## In conversations with MTA members, candidates call education a vital issue

Continued from Page 15

"I believe big time that we have an opportunity to make transformational change in the state, and we are going to do it through education," Healey said. "Massachusetts enshrined education as a constitutional right; that is a value statement and that is something the next governor needs to live."

Chang-Díaz said she views public education, from prekindergarten to college, as central to any efforts to increase opportunities.

"We need to elect a governor who will not just say the right words but has shown she will take action on tough fights, even when it is not politically convenient, in order to deliver the bold, transformational change we have been waiting for," Chang-Díaz said. "Educators need a real voice and a seat at the decision-making table."

As *MTA Today* went to press, the CRC was reviewing candidates. The committee will make recommendations to the Board of Directors.

## Classifieds

### FOR SALE

ORLANDO, FLORIDA — February school vacation week — deeded, fixed-week timeshare for sale. Fully equipped two-bedroom, two-bathroom unit at Orlando International Resort. \$2,000. Call Anne at 954.668.0935 or email [nelscape@gmail.com](mailto:nelscape@gmail.com).

### SUMMER EMPLOYMENT

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positions/locations. Cataumet, Sippewissett, Woods Hole. Memorial Day to end of August. Day and afternoon shifts. Will train. \$19/hour. Call MJA at 508.420.1386 or email [mjaprotectiveservices@comcast.net](mailto:mjaprotectiveservices@comcast.net).

LOOKING FOR NIGHT OWLS! — Staff positions. Wychmere Beach Club in Harwich Port. Overnights midnight to 8 a.m. Front desk security. Seven-day-a-week coverage begins on June 17. Will train. \$19/hour. Call MJA at: 508.420.1386 or email [mjaprotectiveservices@comcast.net](mailto:mjaprotectiveservices@comcast.net).



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## Obituaries

**Jerry A. Badger, 82**, of Wilbraham. Served as a teacher, coach, advisor, assistant principal, and then as principal at Minnechaug Regional High School. He later served as principal of Quaboag Regional High School, retiring in 2003. Feb. 8.

**Susan Ann Carpluk, 67**, of East Longmeadow. Taught in the Springfield Public Schools. Dec. 26.

**Michael Anthony Casale, 86**, of Beverly. Spent his career in the Beverly Public Schools, first as a history teacher at Beverly High School and then in an administrative position until his retirement. Feb. 1.

**Margaret Patricia Casper**, of Attleboro. Taught chemistry and physics at King Philip Regional High School and mathematics at Northeastern University. Jan. 15.

**Mary Lorraine Curro, 71**, of Blandford. Taught for 41 years in the Holyoke Public Schools. Was a member of the desegregation team and the bilingual program and served as the academic coordinator for kindergarten and then as director of early childhood education. She also worked for the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and at Westfield State University. Dec. 12.

**Olga Davis, 69**, of Dracut. Taught French and Spanish in the Dracut school system for 34 years. Dec. 15.

**John F. Downes, 76**, of Sterling. Was a mathematics and computer teacher at Marlborough High School for 35 years. Jan. 31.

**Donna J. Doyle, 74**, of Pocasset and Pompano Beach, Florida. Taught in the Cambridge Public Schools for 29 years. Dec. 19.

**Raymond J. Fell, 94**, of Braintree. Was a teacher and guidance counselor for the Hingham Public Schools. Feb. 5.

**Ann T. Goggins, 89**, of Pittsfield. Taught science and home economics at the former Searles High School in Great

Barrington, then taught at South Junior High School in Pittsfield, now Herberg Middle School, before retiring in 1993. Jan. 14.

**Albert Charles Governor, 93**, of Needham. Was an English teacher at King Philip Regional Junior High School in Wrentham. Jan. 24.

**Rita A. Jensen, 83**, of Lawrence. Was a social studies teacher at Dracut High School for 35 years. Dec. 24.

**Armand L. Leboeuf, 86**, of Dracut. Was employed for many years as the head of the reading department for the Medfield Public Schools. Dec. 15.

**Joan S. Loveless, 72**, of Florence. Worked in early childhood education as a speech and language pathologist for 40 years in the Chicopee and Easthampton school systems, retiring in 2012. Dec. 25.

**Peter F. Matuszczak, 79**, of Chicopee. Was a history and psychology teacher at Chicopee High School for 37 years. Jan. 13.

**James E. McGee, 82**, of The Villages, Florida. Was a teacher for 38 years, mostly in Foxborough, and a lifetime member of the National Education Association. Jan. 26.

**Timothy E. Mitchell, 70**, of New Bedford. Was a math teacher at New Bedford High School and King Philip Regional High School, serving in both schools as mathematics department chair. He also taught at Bridgewater State University. Dec. 4.

**Richard J. Mulhern Sr., 76**, of Worcester. Was a mathematics and computer sciences teacher for the Worcester Public Schools for 39 years, retiring in 2006. Jan. 7.

**Frederick Leo Murphy Jr., 77**, of Hopkinton. Was a teacher at the Kennedy Middle School in Natick before moving to Natick High School, where he spent the remainder of his career. He retired in 2001. Jan. 1.

**Teodora M. Pereira, 87**, of Somerset. Was a teacher at the Doran School in Fall River for 26 years. Jan. 24.

**Joan Lillian Proulx, 84**, of Taunton. Taught business at Mansfield High School for 23 years, retiring in 1999. As the business department chair, she was instrumental in introducing computers into the classroom. Dec. 20.

**Martha Jane Remsen**, of Needham. Was an English teacher at Needham High School for 30 years. Jan. 16.

**Robert C. Rioux, 70**, of Cumberland, Rhode Island. Worked in the Pawtucket School Department for 31 years, first as a fifth-grade teacher and then as a librarian. After retiring from Pawtucket, he worked for 13 years as a high school librarian at Diman Regional Vocational Technical High School in Fall River. Nov. 27.

**Sharyn D. Schnepel, 75**, of Ipswich. Was a home economics teacher at Ipswich Junior High School and Ipswich Middle School, retiring in 2004 after 35 years. Feb. 1.

**Larry D. Thompson, 78**, of Mashpee, formerly of Brockton. Was a science teacher at Brockton High School for 35 years until his retirement. Jan. 3.

**Carol Topham, 91**, of Middleborough, formerly of Marshfield. Was a second-grade teacher for 25 years at the South River School in Marshfield, from 1968 to 1993. Dec. 15.

**Edward J. Vinskey, Jr., 76**, of Ware. Taught in the business department at Ware High School for 33 years before retiring in 2002. Feb. 1.

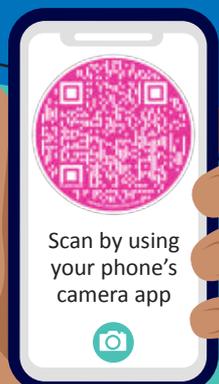
**Sally L. White, 80**, of Arlington. Was a teacher in kindergarten through second grade in the Winchester Public Schools. Jan. 25.

**Frances A. Yonitis, 85**, of Brockton. Was a former Brockton Public Schools teacher. Jan. 3.



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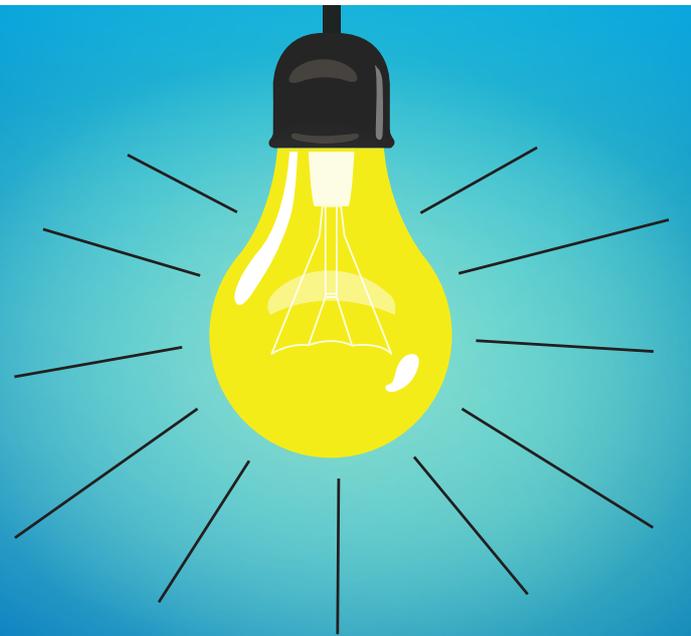
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LC2018-331



## Building connections on education and activism

By Jonathan Ng

Connecting MTA members to their work as educators and to their activism as unionists was the central theme of this year's Winter Union Skills Conference — a series of virtual workshops focused on core priorities such as negotiations, collective action and organizing.

MTA educators from preK through higher education took part in discussions and connected with their colleagues to discuss ideas, strategies, and their vision for the future of public schools and colleges.

A plenary session geared toward collective action and solidarity that featured panelists from the documentary “The Big Scary ‘S’ Word” — with the “S” referring to socialism — kicked off the conference on Feb. 26.

The film follows the story of Stephanie Price, a beleaguered public school educator in Oklahoma City and a member of the Oklahoma Education Association. The filmmaker for the documentary, Yael Bridge, is the brother of Rami Bridge, president of the Somerville Educators Union.

In 2018, OEA educators walked out after experiencing many years of public education being starved for funding.

Price, a panelist in the MTA plenary session, told attendees that she had to work two jobs as a single mother to pay her bills and cover her student loans while also taking care of her child. Tax breaks were given to oil companies in Oklahoma while funding for public education was slashed year after year, she said.

“Watching opportunities for Oklahoma to do something right for education just fell to the wayside,” Price said. “I was just done — I was done waiting for something to happen.”

The OEA strike was a key moment in the “Red for Ed” movement that ultimately spread across the nation.

MTA educators attending the virtual session commented that collective action and solidarity among members across different bargaining units are important when fighting for funding, respect, and the



ability to provide the education all students need and deserve.

“Collective action helped remove that separation between teachers and Education Support Professionals,” said Susan Greco, an instructional assistant in Andover. “When our teachers and paraprofessionals stood together to not enter buildings in September 2020, that’s when I felt that we were equals.”

MTA President Merrie Najimy said that collective action among preK-16 educators is the key to winning fights to advance the common good.

“It’s through collective action that we win,” Najimy said. “That’s where there’s hope in times that are our hardest. Hope and joy always come through collective action.”

“That, however, doesn’t mean we’re not afraid sometimes or that it’s not hard,” she added. “It means that we are in it together.”

In some regions of the Commonwealth, such as the Merrimack Valley, regional bargaining councils now include locals affiliated with the American Federation of Teachers Massachusetts as well as MTA locals.

Union solidarity is highly effective when the MTA locals show up for fellow unions — whether they are affiliated with AFT Massachusetts or another labor organization — and vice versa.

“When we show solidarity within our locals

and other preK-12 locals — and across different bargaining units that are not just MTA and AFT, but when we show up for AFL-CIO locals — they show up for us,” Najimy said. “That’s how we work through joy. That’s how we work through fear and the challenges. And that’s how we win.”

Following the plenary session, online workshops continued through February and March. Locals were encouraged to have groups of members participate in the sessions based on their roles and interests, and many did so.

At one workshop — which featured representatives of locals that had gone on strike or taken other actions in prior years — members learned about the foundational needs and campaign components required to set a local on a successful path toward collective readiness.

Dedham Education Association member Amy Lydon said that before her union went on strike in October 2019, educators had prepared themselves for what was ahead.

Lydon, who at the time was a member of the local’s Contract Action Team, said the DEA prioritized one-on-one communication with its members, assembled contact information, and took numerous other steps.

“We found it was really, really important to have personal emails and cellphone numbers,” she said, adding that local leaders also used a text messaging application that enabled the DEA to communicate instantaneously with members. “It was really helpful,” Lydon said.

Among other issues, the virtual workshops attracted MTA educators for discussions about bargaining fundamentals, legal strategies, communication skills for union leaders and school committee election involvement. Another focus was building momentum for the Fair Share Amendment campaign — which seeks to pass a ballot measure this November that would add a 4 percent tax on annual income over \$1 million to help fund public education and transportation.

*For information on upcoming professional development opportunities, visit [massteacher.org/tpl](https://www.massteacher.org/tpl).*

# THE MTA Advantage

The MTA Advantage is a publication of MTA Benefits, a subsidiary of the Massachusetts Teachers Association

## Save on Summer Travel with MTA Benefits' Enhanced Platform

Millions of Americans are getting antsy to get out and see the world again.

According to a *New York Times* article, early season travel bookings are up as much as 130 percent over last year. For anyone who was forced to delay or cancel their travel plans in the last two years, 2022 promises to be the year of going big.<sup>1</sup>

Before COVID-19, the average American vacationer spent \$1,145 — or \$4,580 for a family of four.<sup>2</sup> With inflation now a factor, there's no doubt that travelers will be spending as much or more but getting less value. That means savvy travelers will be looking for ways to save on big-ticket travel purchases such as hotels, car rentals and airfare.

That's where the MTA Benefits enhanced travel platform comes in.

Recent upgrades not only make it easier to browse and book trips, but MTA Benefits also can offer better rates so you can keep more of your hard-earned cash in your pocket, where it belongs.

### Deeper hotel discounts at popular destinations

Working with Access, our national discount benefits partner, MTA members can choose from more than 850,000 hotels, condos and resort destinations worldwide. You'll find not only popular brands you know and love but also extremely competitive prices. In many cases, members are saving considerably more on hotels than what's typically available at online travel agents — OTAs — such as Expedia, Kayak, and *Hotels.com*.

Sound a little too good to be true?

Maybe you've noticed lately that hotel rates are pretty much the same at most online travel sites. It's because of something in the hotel industry called rate parity. At least 95 percent of all online travel bookings are funneled through the two biggest online travel agencies: Expedia and Booking Holdings, formerly Priceline.<sup>3</sup> Because of their dominance, they force all hotels on their platform to sign a rate-parity agreement. It not only means hotels pay upward of 30 percent in commissions to the online travel agencies for each booking, but also that hotels must promise not to offer lower prices on their public websites or other public channels. Doing so means they risk being removed from the online travel agency platforms. For many hotels, losing that source of revenue would kill their business.

Access is different. It's part of a huge private hotel network that qualifies for rates often lower than wholesale. It also means Access doesn't have to rely on the big websites for hotel inventory. The result is that Access can offer significantly lower rates because it doesn't have to keep rates artificially high due to parity contracts.

So whenever MTA members browse and select a hotel, they'll find savings as much as 50 percent greater than they'd see in a typical online search. That is true for everything from five-star resorts to economy hotels.

As always, many factors influence hotel rates, so occasionally you may find a lower rate elsewhere. But overall, MTA members will consistently find lower rates and a bigger selection than is available to the public.

(continued on page 2)



# Temporary Expansion of Student Loan Forgiveness

Were you ever told you have “the wrong kind of loans” or the “wrong repayment plan” when pursuing forgiveness of federal student loans? Have friends or family members told you not to even bother trying to have your loan balances forgiven? Did you feel a disturbance in “the Force” on Oct. 6, 2021, when the Biden Administration announced it was temporarily waiving almost all of the requirements that made forgiveness so difficult to receive?

Well, it’s real! Not the Force, unfortunately, but the temporary waiver is real, and it’s already reducing millions of dollars in debt for public employees who might never have qualified under the old rules.

Until Oct. 31, 2022, when the waiver period expires, people holding Federal Family Education Loans can get relief by following a few easy steps.



People who had been denied relief because they were repaying through an ineligible repayment plan (very often the elongated 25- or 30-year plans) can get relief. Those who were granted \$5,000 or \$17,500 in relief through the Teacher Loan Forgiveness program — a different program altogether predicated on teaching in a Title I school — can temporarily apply the five years they used to qualify for TLF toward the 10 years of repayment needed for Public Service Loan Forgiveness.

Even if you’ve occasionally missed a payment or paid late, and even if you won’t reach 10 years of repayment by the date the waiver expires, the waiver will allow you to get retroactive credit for the payments you did make, as long as you were working for an eligible employer at the time. There is something good for almost everyone through this waiver. The steps you’ll need to take aren’t terribly complicated, but they differ depending on the types of loans you’ve got and on the number of years your loans have been in repayment.

To find out more about how the waiver could help you get rid of your federal student loan debt, attend one of the free student loan webinars brought to you by MTA Benefits — and do so as soon as possible. The waiver opportunity is real, but it’s also temporary.

The next webinar offered by Cambridge Credit Counseling, an MTAB partner, will be held from 6 to 7:30 p.m. on May 18. If you’d like a follow-up discussion with a counselor, Cambridge Credit Counseling will provide one for free. Visit [www.cambridge-credit.org/mta](http://www.cambridge-credit.org/mta) for more information.

## Save on Summer Travel with MTA Benefits’ Enhanced Platform

(continued from page 1)

MTA travelers can book with peace of mind knowing most hotels offer free cancellation right up to a few days before arrival. That way, you don’t have to worry if the travel plans change — or if you just change your mind.

Access also offers a free hotel booking confirmation service. Access representatives call each hotel booking a few days before your arrival and confirm the details of your reservation. If the confirmation service discovers any discrepancies, it can fix the problem well before you arrive at the registration desk.

Your benefits also include savings on car rentals, theme parks, entertainment, activities, flights, cruises and more. In addition, you’ll find local deals with savings at more than 50,000 popular restaurants and more than 175,000 shopping locations. There are also more than 50,000 recreational and entertainment opportunities.

To book your next getaway and get the most from your vacation dollars, visit [mtabenefits.accessdevelopment.com](http://mtabenefits.accessdevelopment.com). If you have questions or need assistance in booking your vacation, call 800.336.0990.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/02/15/travel/trends-spring-2022.html>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.creditdonkey.com/average-cost-vacation.html>

<sup>3</sup> <https://hoteltechreport.com/news/otas-problems>



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2 Heritage Drive, 8th Floor, Quincy, MA 02171-2119  
Tel: 800.336.0990 • Fax: 617.557.6687  
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No dues dollars are ever used to market MTA Benefits programs.

# Tip Sheet

All discounts listed in the Tip Sheet can be found at [mtabenefits.com](http://mtabenefits.com).

## Spring Gift Guide

Spring includes many of our favorite celebrations: Mother's Day, Father's Day and graduations, from kindergarten through college. While celebrating with family and friends is a perfect way to mark the occasion, a gift is often included as a sign of appreciation or congratulations — a cost that can rise quickly.



### MTA Benefits has discounts that will help you provide meaningful gifts that stay within budget.

Whether you are shopping for a parent or a recent graduate, nearly everyone could benefit from assistance with prepping weekly dinners. Access Nationwide Discounts offers members several options for discounts on meal-delivery services, saving money, time and energy. Menus for each kit are customizable, with dietary options such as vegetarian, pescatarian and gluten free. **Blue Apron** offers top-rated favorites such as health-conscious options, and members can get \$160 off and free shipping on the first box, or \$80 on the first four boxes. Discounts on the convenient meal kits from **HelloFresh** are 50 percent on the first box in addition to 15 percent on every box for an entire year. **Green Chef** provides healthy and flavorful meals with organic ingredients and excellent member savings. Choose from 50 percent off the first box, free shipping and 15 percent on the remaining boxes for the year, or, for new customers, \$90 off. Additional discounts are available from **Dream Dinners** and **Good Chop**.



Food gift cards are a present that's great for everyone, but especially for graduates heading to college. Save 5 percent on gift cards of any amount to **Buffalo Wild Wings** and **Domino's**. **Applebee's** and **IHOP** offer a 10 percent discount on your gift card purchase. Save \$5 on a \$50 e-gift card purchase for **Olive Garden**, **Longhorn Steakhouse** and **Red Lobster**. A stash of snacks can be helpful for students, and what could be better than cookies, popcorn or chocolate-covered fruit? Save 20 percent on your order at **Cheryl's Cookies** and **The Popcorn Factory** and 15 percent on your **Shari's Berries** purchase.

The gift of an experience can be unforgettable, and if that's what you're searching for, Access has plenty of options. For the crime-solvers, take them to a dinner mystery such as **The Dinner Detective** (save 10 percent) in Natick or Providence or **The Murder Mystery Company** (save 50 percent on a single dinner show) in Quincy and Agawam.

For those looking for a little fun without a side of crime, members get up to six tickets to **Blues Cruise** or **Rock & Roll Cruise** tickets with the purchase of six, departing from Rowes Wharf in Boston. **Zombie Scavengers** offers members 60 percent off on the purchase of tickets for up to six people, with locations in Springfield and Worcester, as well as Connecticut.

If you want to do something special for kindergarten graduates, fun options are available. Try **Pom-Pom Pony Rides** in Lynn, which offers a free hour of face painting with one hour of pony rides, or go to **Mike's Moonwalk Rentals** in Boylston, where you'll save 10 percent on all rentals. At **Launch Trampoline Park** — with locations in Methuen, Hartford, Connecticut, and Warwick, Rhode Island — members are eligible for a variety of discounts that vary by location, including a free 30-minute jump.



No matter whom you might be purchasing gifts for this spring and summer, thoughtfulness and great savings are available to you as an MTA member. All discounts mentioned in this article are courtesy of Access Nationwide Discounts. Visit [www.mtabenefits.com/access](http://www.mtabenefits.com/access) for more information on these discounts — and many others.

### Check out NEW discounts at these locations!

- Bates Crafters Gallery & Country Store – Orange
- Beautiful Things – Westport
- Brissonté Gifts & Home Decor – North Reading
- Cahoon Museum of American Art – Cotuit
- Fogbuster Coffee Works – Greenfield
- Hestia Creations – Marblehead
- Kirsten Spencer Photography – Orange
- lala books – Lowell
- Lowell Book Company in Mill No. 5 – Lowell (Member-Owned)
- RR Traders – Newburyport
- Sadie Green's – Sturbridge
- Worcester Railers – Worcester

Visit [www.mtabenefits.com/discounts](http://www.mtabenefits.com/discounts) for a full list.

# Better hearing can alleviate social isolation and loneliness

May is Better Hearing and Speech Month, which is why it is a great time to check your hearing and discuss the importance of treating hearing loss — not only for your hearing health but your overall well-being. That's because hearing loss has been associated with several physical and mental health conditions, including loneliness and social isolation.<sup>1</sup>

## According to the National Institute on Aging:

"Loneliness and social isolation are different, but related. Loneliness is the distressing feeling of being alone or separated. Social isolation is the lack of social contacts and having few people to interact with regularly. You can live alone and not feel lonely or socially isolated, and you can feel lonely while being with other people."<sup>2</sup>

Fortunately, there are many ways to overcome loneliness and social isolation. Here are a few tips to get started.

### ✓ Fill your calendar

Schedule time to stay in touch with loved ones. This could mean setting up a recurring time for a phone or video call — or scheduling an in-person activity everyone can enjoy, such as having a picnic or playing board games.



### ✓ Do something active

We all know regular exercise is good for our health. So why not sign up for a walking club, group fitness class, or sports lessons to interact with others at the same time?



### ✓ Find a hobby

Whether you'd like to pick up an old hobby or try something new, doing it with others is a great way to find like-minded people with similar interests. Many local businesses, community centers, and educational institutions offer group classes for all kinds of hobbies — including painting, learning a foreign language, creative writing, music lessons, photography, cooking, birding, gardening, and floral arranging.

### ✓ Get involved

Being more involved in your community is a great way to foster a sense of purpose and belonging in addition to connecting with others. Consider volunteering for a cause you're passionate about, joining a club or organization, or simply getting to know your neighbors better.

### ✓ Get your hearing checked

When hearing is difficult, it can be challenging to communicate and maintain relationships with loved ones. If hearing loss is preventing you from meaningfully connecting with others, getting your hearing checked is a great first step toward preventing or reducing feelings of social isolation and loneliness.

As an MTA member, you have access to hearing care through Hear In America, where you can save on the average retail price of high-quality hearing aids. Now is the perfect time to take control of your hearing health. Call 855.252.7639 to schedule a hearing exam with a provider near you.

<sup>1</sup> Shukla, A., Harper, M., Pedersen, E., Goman, A., Suen, J. J., Price, C., Applebaum, J., Hoyer, M., Lin, F. R., & Reed, N. S. (2020). *Hearing Loss, Loneliness, and Social Isolation: A Systematic Review. Otolaryngology — Head and Neck Surgery*, 162(5), 622–633. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0194599820910377>.

<sup>2</sup> US Department of Health and Human Services. (2021, January 14). *Loneliness and Social Isolation — Tips for Staying Connected*. National Institute on Aging. <https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/loneliness-and-social-isolation-tips-staying-connected>.

All program and pricing information was current at the time of publication (April 2022) and is subject to change without notice. To find out what may have changed, please call MTA Benefits at 800.336.0990.