



Overall Goals and Legislative Priorities Spring 2025

1. Adding Vocational Seats

We want every student who wants a high quality vocational technical or agricultural education – and who could benefit from it – to get one. This is not currently possible because we have thousands of students on wait lists. For that reason, we want to increase the number of seats in our schools.

MAVA Supports:

- **S.358 (Feeney)/H.651(Moran/Scanlon)** – *An Act to improve access, opportunity, and capacity in Massachusetts vocational-technical education.* This is sponsored by Sen. Paul Feeney in the Senate and by Second Assistant Majority Leader Frank Moran and Rep. Adam Scanlon in the House.

It is the primary bill filed on MAVA's behalf this legislative session.

Among other things, this omnibus bill would (1) increase Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) reimbursement rates to at least 75% for construction of new vocational schools and those offering five or more Chapter 74 programs, (2) create a \$300 million grant program to add vocational seats in Health Careers, Advanced Manufacturing, HVAC, Plumbing, Electrical, Welding, Robotics, Information Technology and other high-wage, high-demand occupations.

Grants of \$5 million to \$25 million would allow our schools to expand their buildings and create programs to address occupational training needs identified in their Regional Workforce Blueprints. The grant program is designed for voc-techs, aggies, and comprehensive high schools with a track record of running Chapter 74 programs. It's primarily aimed at regions with wait lists and those serving Gateway Cities. It would be run by the Executive Office of Education and the Workforce Skills Cabinet, just like the highly popular and effective Skills Capital Grant program that funds large vocational equipment purchases.

- **H.54 (Governor Healey)** - This is the Higher Ed Bond Bill, which among other provisions, includes \$100 million in Skills Capital Grants and \$120 million in Community College Collaboration Grants to fund critical equipment and facilities expenses.
- **H.55 (Governor Healey)** – This is the Fair Share Supplemental Budget which, among many other things, recommends \$75 million in “Lab Modernization Grants” for

capital improvements to reduce vocational waitlists. MAVA supports this effort but seeks \$300 million for this initiative.

MAVA Opposes:

- **S.329 (Cronin)** – *An Act to create vocational education annexes in gateway cities*
Note: The bill seemingly would add vocational seats only at comprehensive high schools and to the exclusion of vocational schools. The bill also makes no funding distinction between comprehensive high schools that have a proven track-record of running successful Chapter 74 programs and those which do not.

2. Defending High-Quality Vocational Education

For us, the key words are “high quality.” We will fight to maintain and expand high-quality Chapter 74 programs.

Massachusetts is often referred to as the “gold standard” for vocational education in the United States because of our laws, regulations, and unique delivery system. Because of what we do and how we do it, our schools have high graduate rates, high attendance rates, low dropout rates. We actively engage students in their learning – and it works.

MAVA Supports: Any legislation that will maintain or enhance high-quality vocational education provided under Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 74.

MAVA Supports:

- **HD.4510 (Moran/Scanlon)** – *An Act establishing a vocational admissions task force.*
Filed by Second Assistant Majority Leader Frank Moran and Rep. Adam Scanlon, the Task Force would take a measured, objective, and unbiased look at vocational admissions in Massachusetts. This bill would pause efforts to force vocational schools to use a one-size-fits-all lottery system across the state. The need to overhaul and essentially destroy the existing system has not been demonstrated. The impact of a lottery is untested and unknown.
- **H.694 (Scanlon)** – *An Act to preserve local control of Chapter 74 admissions policies*

MAVA Opposes: We oppose any attempt to weaken current state law and regulations on vocational education. We will continue to insist on high standards – even where they make our jobs more difficult. We don’t want easy. We want effective. We’ve built a great system, one we can all be proud of.

To be more precise, MAVA opposes weakening of vocational admissions standards, watering down of teacher licensure requirements, further dilution of curriculum for Chapter 74 programs, lowering standards or expectations for vocational students, inconsistent oversight and enforcement by the state of standards in Chapter 74 programs, diversion of federal Perkins grant funds for state administration use or non-vocational purposes, and

any policy that conflates or blurs the lines between an immersive Chapter 74 vocational education program and more modest types of career exposure or career exploration courses.

MAVA Opposes:

- **H.626 (Kushmerek)** – This bill would mandate a blind admissions lottery.
- **S.330 (Cronin)** – This bill would mandate a minimum criteria lottery.

3. Securing Adequate Resources and Equal Treatment

For many years, vocational education was largely ignored, underfunded, and underappreciated. In the last few decades, things have changed dramatically. With the advent of high-stakes statewide exams, vocational schools were forced to improve the quality of their curriculum, particularly their academic offerings. They did. This resulted in improved student achievement, more interest from parents and students, and significantly more applications for seats in vocational schools and programs. Vocational students deserve equal treatment: resources, curriculum, expectations. And the voices of vocational educators deserve to be heard.

MAVA Supports: Any legislation that will maintain or expand Capital Skills grant funding for the purchase of large and expensive vocational equipment; add Lab Modernization grants for small vocational expansion projects; help ease the financial burden on member towns of large MSBA-supported construction projects; make vocational schools in rural areas eligible for additional Rural Funding; add vocational expertise to the MSBA Board of Directors and MSBA Advisory Board; address the individual needs of member schools; or ensure that MAVA is included in any discussions about Chapter 74, modifying vocational curriculum, licensure, funding, or any long-range plans about public education in Massachusetts.