

## **Testimony of American Student Assistance on S. 762 and H. 1206 (An Act relative to the advance placement examinations)**

American Student Assistance (ASA), a Massachusetts non-profit committed to helping kids know themselves, know their options, and make informed choices to achieve their education and career goals, would like to offer our support to S. 762 and H. 1206 (an Act relative to the advance placement examinations). This legislation would create uniform standards across all public higher education institutions for granting college credit for AP exams with a score of 3 or higher, thereby helping thousands of students across the commonwealth save time and money on their post-secondary education.

ASA is an organization with a long history of helping students gain access to education beyond high school. Through our Talent Search, Upward Bound and GEAR UP programs at schools in Boston and Brockton, as well as our community walk-in centers, we reach nearly 5,000 students each year as they prepare for college. Many of our counselors tutor students through AP classes and help them prepare for the exams. We've witnessed firsthand the powerful benefits of exposing students to demanding college-level coursework while they're still in high school. Students not only gain a sense of the academic rigor, grit and determination needed to succeed in college, but also have the opportunity to skip introductory classes or earn credits toward their college degree. With the average college credit today costing close to \$600, it's easy to see how every credit earned before even stepping foot on campus can mean significant savings.<sup>i</sup> AP participation can also decrease students' time to college graduation. According to the College Board, the average net price for one year at a public four-year higher education institution now stands at \$14,880, while a private four-year college will cost families an average of \$27,290.<sup>ii</sup> Clearly, graduating one year or even just one semester early can bring substantial savings and reduce student debt loads.

Unfortunately, while ASA has seen many students benefit from AP classes, we've also seen students fail to earn credit for their hard work. Non-uniform policies among Massachusetts public higher education institutions, and even among different programs at the same institution, produce unfair outcomes for students who have achieved a 3 or above on an AP exam, the score at which the College Board and the American Council on Education (ACE) recommend colleges begin awarding credit.<sup>iii</sup> The proposed legislation would go a long way toward ensuring deserving students across the Commonwealth receive equal reward for their efforts. Additionally, it would guarantee a higher level of transparency around colleges' admissions and enrollment procedures as it would require public institutions to post their AP credits policy on their webpage. Just as with financial aid, admissions information must be clear, transparent and consistent so that students and families can make well-informed decisions about college attendance. For many students, college represents one of the biggest investments of their lives, and they deserve to understand before they enroll whether or not the time and money spent on an AP class is going to be counted.

AP students are among the most motivated and persistent, and for the third year in a row Massachusetts once again has the distinction of being the top state in the nation in terms of the percentage of the graduating class that scored a 3 or higher on an Advanced Placement exam.<sup>iv</sup> However, this motivation and persistence can be severely damaged when students begin to doubt the payoff for their hard work. Worse still, this discouragement and skepticism can leak over to word-of-mouth to younger siblings and friends. A feeling of "it's not worth it" among today's AP grads may dissuade tomorrow's high school students from even pursuing the AP track. Massachusetts should join the growing list of 31 states that have already passed similar legislation to require uniformity and consistency in public college AP credit policies. We urge you to vote these bills out of committee.

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<sup>i</sup> Kirkham, Elyssa. (2018, January 24). Study: Here's How Much College Credits Actually Cost. Student Loan Hero. Retrieved from <https://studentloanhero.com/featured/cost-per-credit-hour-study/>

<sup>ii</sup> The College Board. Trends in Higher Education: Trends in College Pricing. Average Net Price Over Time for Full-Time Students, by Sector. Retrieved from: <https://trends.collegeboard.org/college-pricing/figures-tables/average-net-price-over-time-full-time-students-sector>

<sup>iii</sup> The College Board. AP and College Enrollment. Retrieved from <https://aphighered.collegeboard.org/college-enrollment>

<sup>iv</sup> Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. (2019, February 8). Press Release: **Mass. Students Lead Nation in Advanced Placement Success for 3rd Year**. Retrieved from <https://mailchi.mp/doe.mass.edu/press-release-massachusetts-students-lead-nation-in-advanced-placement-success-for-third-year>