



Max Page, President

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**Massachusetts Teachers Association
Safe Schools for All Task Force
2 Heritage Drive
8th Floor
Quincy, MA 02171
April 16, 2025**

**Secretary Patrick Tutwiler
Massachusetts Executive Office of Education
1 Ashburton Place, Room 1403
Boston, MA 02108**

Dear Secretary Tutwiler,

Thank you, Mr. Secretary, for meeting with us today, and listening to our members that are directly being affected in our schools. On behalf of the Massachusetts Teachers Association's Safe Schools for All Task Force, we are writing to urge your support in addressing a crisis that continues to grow in urgency across our schools: workplace violence and the need for stronger protections for public education employees.

Educators and Education Support Professionals throughout the Commonwealth are committed to fostering safe, inclusive and supportive learning environments for every student. Yet increasingly, they are finding their own safety and well-being jeopardized by rising incidents of verbal abuse, harassment and physical violence in the workplace. These conditions are unacceptable and preventable. As members of the Safe Schools for All Task Force, we believe that meaningful change starts with acknowledgment, accountability and action. We respectfully call on you to lead by example and take the following steps:

1. Acknowledge Employer Responsibility for Safety

Every employer, including school districts, has a responsibility to provide a safe workplace. Schools must implement clear policies and procedures to prevent and address workplace violence. Our collective goal must be zero injuries at work, because no educator should be harmed in the course of serving their students.

2. Staff Our Schools to Meet Student Needs

Educators need more support, more trained professionals and more resources. We call for increased staffing across all roles that support student learning and well-being, including teachers, counselors, therapists, BCBA's, social workers, ESPs and hall monitors. General educators also need additional training to respond effectively to students' complex emotional needs.

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3. Establish a Statewide Reporting System for Incidents of Harm

We urge the creation of a centralized, transparent database to track instances of assault, harassment and threats against school staff. Educators deserve consistent reporting protocols, thorough investigations, and accountability in how such incidents are handled and communicated. Include whistleblower protections for educators who come forward and report workplace violence at their workplace.

4. Support Legislation to Improve Student Mental Health

We ask for your support of student-centered legislation, such as the Recess Bill and the Whole Child Grant Program, both of which address core student needs and reduce the conditions that often lead to behavioral challenges.

5. Support Bargaining for Health and Safety Protections

Across the state, educators are advocating for health and safety provisions in local collective bargaining agreements, including assault leave, joint health and safety committees and full investigations after incidents. While we understand the limits of Chapter 150E, we ask for your acknowledgment and support of our right to bargain in good faith for safety and well-being, and your consideration of how these local protections could eventually be expanded statewide.

6. Clarify and Reassess Student Discipline Regulations

Educators throughout Massachusetts report that student discipline regulations are being misinterpreted or inconsistently applied by districts. When were these regulations last reviewed? Do districts have the training, staffing, and resources to provide the alternative supports required by current law? We urge a thorough evaluation of these policies and their real-world implementation.

7. Respect Educator Autonomy and Professionalism

Educators know firsthand what their students need academically and emotionally. Too often teachers are forced to follow canned curriculum, which leaves many students stressed and anxious, causes them to disengage and fall behind and creates behavioral problems. Educators should have the right to meet students where they are and use their professional judgement to customize class materials to engage and nurture students with unique academic and emotional needs.

8. Remove Policy Barriers and Align State Agencies

We urge you to remove any roadblocks, within DESE or elsewhere, that impede progress on educator safety. Please support the work of the Department of Labor



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Standards to develop a Workplace Violence Prevention Standard, and encourage full collaboration between DESE, DLS and the MTA to ensure public school employees are fully protected.

9. Publicly Support Educator-Led Safety Advocacy

Will you publicly affirm your support for educators who are advocating for safer schools for all? What actions are you prepared to take now to demonstrate your commitment to the safety and well-being of the professionals who make our public schools thrive?

The work of educating students cannot be separated from the safety of those doing the work. Our schools cannot truly be safe unless the people who care for and teach our students are safe too. We appreciate your attention to this urgent matter and welcome the opportunity to meet with you and your team again in person to continue this conversation. We would appreciate a written response to this letter within the next month.

Sincerely,

Eric Simard and Donna Grady, Co-Chairs
On behalf of the MTA Safe Schools for All Task Force