

**Testimony of
Frederick M. Kalisz, Jr, Executive Director
Parents Alliance for Catholic Education
in support of HB 1933
before the
Joint Committee on Education
The 187th General Court of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts
The State House – Boston, MA
May 10, 2010**

To the respective Committee Chairs and Members of the Committee, thank you for this opportunity to offer testimony in support HB 1933. My name is Frederick M. Kalisz, Jr., Executive Director of the Parents Alliance for Catholic Education, PACE. PACE is a state wide advocacy organization that strives to inform parents of Catholic School students on matters of public policy. In addition, we strive for equity, equity in sharing of resources that the law provides to students that attend non-public institutions of education for benefit and to the benefit of their communities. The PACE organization supports HB 1933 because it affords an opportunity for students of taxpaying parents that attend Catholic School, as in our case, to potentially be eligible for the John and Abigail Adams Scholarship program to Massachusetts state universities. I emphasize the wording taxpaying parents, because these residents of the Commonwealth who have exercised their right to choice in education. In doing so, they have paid in the area of \$60,000 each for an elementary and high school education. And it is not uncommon that these families have more than one child in Catholic schools. By exercising their choice another interesting occurrence has been noted, they have saved the taxpayers of Massachusetts some \$130,000 for each student attending non-public school that would otherwise have been paid out to communities in the form of Chapter 70 funding. Now as their children plan to go on to college – a state university – they hope for break, a state scholarship opportunity granted based upon successful academic achievement. As you know, non-public schools are not required to take the MCAS exam. That is why we are happy to support Rep. Jones' amendment that affords the opportunity to take the MCAS based upon a voluntary request and the ability to individually pay a fair and equitable fee to take that exam.

There are 49 Catholic high schools in our systems across the state. This year our graduation rate will be around 97% with possibly 23% attending Massachusetts state universities. That means with approximately 5900 graduating seniors in Catholic high schools 1475 graduates will be going on to our state universities. At Malden Catholic High that means of 139 graduating seniors 134 are going on to college; with some 21 attending Massachusetts state universities. And at Catholic Memorial in West Roxbury, out of 144 seniors 139 going on to college, of which 19 are choosing Massachusetts state universities.

When we think of the effort extended by parents to exercise choice, the sacrifices financially and the academic return achieved by their children— and then, that a number of these same students wish to continue their education by attending a Massachusetts state university and in doing so potentially looking to develop their post graduate years in the Commonwealth – the result is more than an education, it is a major step towards reducing the brain drain often spoken of regarding our youngest and brightest.

The allowance of taking the MCAS rewards three groups: our students looking to challenge and advance themselves; their parents who have invested heavily in their education and are looking to still financially help their children achieve their dreams; and finally our Commonwealth that attracts these talented and promising students who recognize the importance and value of an advanced studies program in our Commonwealth's higher education system.

The PACE organization and our Catholic schools communities hope that you will favorably consider this amendment and advance it. The end result of this will be greater opportunities for our young as well as for the academic and economic development and advancement of our Commonwealth. Thank you.