

# AFT Massachusetts 2025 Convention Report



Saturday, May 3, 2025  
IBEW Local 103 Union Hall  
256 Freeport Street, Dorchester, MA



# **AFT MASSACHUSETTS LOBBY DAY**

**JUNE 25, 2025**

9:30am – 12:00pm  
MA State House, Rm 428  
15 Beacon St, Boston 02133

**SCAN  
TO  
RSVP**



Join fellow AFT Massachusetts members from across MA to advocate for our legislative agenda! We'll chat with legislators & staff to share our experience and expertise as educators because there is *nothing* more powerful than your story.

*Children of all ages welcome! Childcare will be available for kids who don't want to join for legislator office visits — though it's wonderful for them to join!*

Breakfast and lunch will be provided.



# 2025 AFT Massachusetts Convention: United for a Better Future



**Saturday, May 3 • IBEW Local 103 Union Hall  
256 Freeport Street, Dorchester, MA**

**N**ovember 2024 brought great highs and lows for educators and working families throughout Massachusetts and the nation. Although the presidential election and ensuing chaos has quickly overshadowed some of the amazing victories we saw — including the decisive win on Question 2 to eliminate the MCAS graduation requirements and historic passage of the Social Security Fairness Act — they are certainly still worthy of celebration.

At this time of uncertainty on the national level, we will continue to organize and support important programs and protections that support working families, unionists, educators, and students across the state. We will bring together members and our allies to fight on critical issues including fully funding the Student Opportunity Act, fully funding our libraries, reforming the state education funding formula to keep up with inflation, expanding opportunities for vocational and technical education, and large-scale investments in public higher education — a crucial gateway to the middle class.

Just because we will need to play offense against the dangerous agenda of the current Administration does not mean that we can take our eyes off our united efforts for progress. These fights will be more important than ever to support our schools, our students, and our communities.

One thing is certain: the work we do together, is more important than ever. Just as our educators, healthcare professionals, and public employees will continue doing everything they can to make a difference in the lives of the people they serve — we will continue to unite and fight for a stronger, better tomorrow for our members, their families, and our communities.

Convention delegates from across the state will come together for our annual convention to discuss the important issues that need action at the local and federal levels while celebrating some of our recent accomplishments as a Union united for a better future.





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## Our Mission

**The American Federation of Teachers is a union of professionals that champions fairness; democracy; economic opportunity; and high-quality public education, healthcare and public services for our students, their families and our communities.**

**We are committed to advancing these principles through community engagement, organizing, collective bargaining and political activism, and especially through the work our members do.**



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## 2025 AFT Massachusetts President's Report from Jessica Tang

**Together, with key allies and our union brothers and sisters, we're standing up to the White House's repeated attacks on public education.**



PHOTO BY MICHAEL SPARKS KEEGAN

**F**or over a decade I have attended AFT Massachusetts conventions, but this is my first full convention as your President, a position I continue to be honored to fill.

The past year, we marked some tremendous wins here in Massachusetts, while the public sector — as a system — has faced unprecedented challenges. No one is immune. The shifting landscape and repeated threats to the work of our members in the classrooms — from PreK-12 through higher education — to our members in our libraries and hospitals have created a new sense of urgency for our unions across the board.

Despite new threats, or even because of new threats, it's important to not lose sight of the progress we have made. We saw voters across the state come out overwhelmingly to support Question 2, eliminating the MCAS as a graduation requirement. We passed significant components of the Educator Diversity Act as part of a state economic development bill. Our union stood with President Joseph Biden as he signed the Social Security Fairness Act into law.

And, while it didn't make it to the Governor's desk before the end of session, our Retirement Plus legislation passed the House of Representatives — an important milestone after eight years of advocacy.

Together, with key allies and our union brothers and sisters, we're standing up to the White House's repeated attacks on public education. We're fighting to protect our students, our educators, and our schools — whether it be through lawsuits to stop these illegal attacks or advocacy for the state to step in and fill necessary gaps. On March 4th, dozens of locals joined over 2,000 AFT locals and community groups across the nation to stand up for our students and schools. We were also a big part of the historic April 5th Hand Off rallies across the nation, where at least three million people marched in the streets to protest the harm that current federal policies are inflicting on our communities and those who are most vulnerable. We are just getting started.

*2025 President's Report continued on page 2* ►



### 2025 Presidents Report continued

We remain strong. We must remain united. In strong times and in uncertain times, solidarity and organizing is always the answer and, as President of the AFT Massachusetts, I pledge that we will use every tool at our disposal to protect our AFT Massachusetts families and the tens of thousands of students and communities we serve.

With a growing membership of 25,000, the American Federation of Teachers Massachusetts is a strong voice for public education, families, and communities throughout every region of the Commonwealth. I have met with local presidents and members in every corner of the state. Our membership is diverse. We all bring different histories and perspectives to the table. That diversity — which we use to unite us instead of divide us — is one of our greatest strengths. That is why we've instituted monthly Presidents Assemblies, to bring together our local leaders on a regular basis to learn about and from each other as we work

*“We remain strong. We must remain united. In strong times and in uncertain times, solidarity and organizing is always the answer and, as President of the AFT Massachusetts, I pledge that we will use every tool at our disposal to protect our AFT Massachusetts families and the tens of thousands of students and communities we serve.”*

— Jessica Tang, President,  
AFT Massachusetts



toward our shared goals. By accepting and celebrating our differences, we strengthen our collective voice. We are strong, when you are strong.

### **We have seen historic raises for many of our lowest paid workers — paraprofessionals and PSRP's — in every region of the state.**

With support from AFT Massachusetts, locals across the state — including Boston, Chelsea, Salem, Lowell, and the South Shore Educational Collaborative, plus our Boston, Holbrook and Cambridge library chapters — have secured strong contracts that deliver the higher pay, increased benefits, and stronger support our educators and school employees deserve. We have seen historic raises for many of our lowest paid workers — paraprofessionals and PSRP's — in every region of the state. We have seen an increase in paid family medical leave, parental leave, and policies that recognize that our members are also parents and caregivers. Additionally, the Lynn Teachers Union and Salem Teachers Union were able to successfully defeat proposed charter expansions, which would have decimated their respective school budgets.

The AFT Massachusetts will continue to organize and support the programs and protections to lift up working families, teachers, and students across the state. Bringing together members and our allies, we will fight for critical issues including: establishing a minimum wage for educators; giving our longest-serving teachers a second chance at Retirement Plus; fully funding the Student Opportunity Act; reforming the state funding formula so that it actually keeps up with inflation; expanding opportunities for vocational and technical education; and large-scale investments in public higher education — a crucial component of economic mobility.





You play an important role in this work. Your voice and experience matter. That's why we're hosting our first statewide AFT Massachusetts Advocacy Day at the State House next month. On Wednesday, June 25, members from locals across the state will share their stories directly with legislators and their staff, advocating for some of our education priorities this legislative session. We've also convened working groups on critical areas so that we can be not only proactive about our priorities, but are able to tackle issues as they arise.

### **In the face of unprecedented attacks, we must remain vigilant and united.**

Even with all of this, we know the division and chaos being created at the federal level is daunting and, at times, feels all-consuming. We stand to lose generations of children while working families are stripped of the wages, benefits, and protections they're owed. Collective bargaining and the right to unionize is under attack. We saw what happened to federal workers. They may be the first, but will not be the last group of workers under attack. Immigrants — including those with work authorizations and status — are being targeted without due process. This includes our own union workers and their family members.

In the face of unprecedented attacks, we must remain vigilant and united. Today, we are proud to present the start of a Strategic Plan to take the AFT Massachusetts through the 2026 midterm elections and beyond. For the first time, we hosted retreats for both our staff and Executive Board members to analyze our organization's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. We looked at data from our last Fall Conference and focused on what brings us together as a state federation. Our Executive Board has worked hard to create the foundation for a thoughtful strategic plan that takes into account the needs of our locals, our families, and the

communities we serve. It will help us build power within our locals while we take steps to lead on key education, public sector, health and labor issues at the local, state, and federal level.

It is critical that we remain nimble. Establishing clear lines of communication and investing in organizing and training for all types of collective action will be crucial to our success. The speed at which this administration is eliminating long-held rights and securities in flagrant disregard of the law is part of their plan. They want to create chaos because it can be harder to organize during times of despair and confusion. We must meet the moment, staying focused and unified in our efforts to safeguard our fundamental rights. Our collective action is our power and part of the solution.

That is why the AFT Massachusetts is **United for our Future**. Our members, our families, our communities and our democracy depend on it.

*“You play an important role in this work. Your voice and experience matter. That's why we're hosting our first statewide AFT Massachusetts Advocacy Day at the State House next month. On Wednesday, June 25, members from locals across the state will share their stories directly with legislators and their staff, advocating for some of our education priorities this legislative session.”*

— Jessica Tang, President,  
AFT Massachusetts







## 2025 AFT Massachusetts Secretary-Treasurer's Report from Brant Duncan

# Upholding every child's right to a free and equal education is a critical cornerstone of our democracy.

**A**s educators, paraprofessionals, librarians, higher education faculty and staff, health and public service workers, you play a critical role in our work to protect public education and ensure every student has the resources and services needed to thrive inside and outside the classroom.

With the White House's unrelenting assaults on public education, the start of 2025 has been difficult for us all. We want you to know that we recognize the toll these unprecedented times are taking on your lives, your family, and your community.

While we have a fight ahead of us, I'd like to take a moment to remind everyone of the tremendous wins we saw in 2024 for educators and working families. After years of advocacy, the Social Security Fairness Act was signed into law by President Biden. Residents throughout Massachusetts voted overwhelmingly to eliminate the MCAS as a graduation requirement. Key provisions of our Educator Diversity Act passed as part of a large-scale economic investment bill. We saw movement on legislation to finally fix the RetirementPlus system for some of our state's longest-serving educators at the end of last session - something we're working hard to push across the finish line this session.



### **Important that we continue to fight for the programs and services our communities deserve.**

Now is the time for Massachusetts to lead and be the beacon of equity the rest of the country needs. At the federal level, we're seeing widespread cuts and broad executive orders that impact every single aspect of society. The lives of working families, children, those living in poverty, those with disabilities, the LGBTQ+ community, and immigrants are being upended to help finance tax cuts for the super wealthy. These cuts are so extensive, it will be impossible for state leaders to fill in all the gaps. That makes it even more important that we

continue to fight for the programs and services our communities deserve.

### **Unite and fight for a stronger, better tomorrow for our members and their families.**

To be successful, we must remain a united front. Just like it has in the past, the labor movement will play an integral role in any campaign to defend our nation's democracy and the fundamental rights of all. Our ability to lift up working families, educators, and students hinges on our strength as a union. Just as our educators, healthcare professionals, and public employees spend every day serving and providing for their communities, we will continue to unite and fight for a stronger, better tomorrow for our members and their families.

As your AFT Massachusetts Secretary-Treasurer, I oversee the use of our union's financial resources and make sure that funds are used in a strategic and meaningful way. Working in tandem with members of our Executive Board and President Tang, I manage the allocation of funding that supports critical union staff and programming — with the end goal always being to advance the overall mission of our union and support the work of our locals. I want each local and member to consider me a resource and partner in their work, which is why I hold regular workshops and assemblies — from local treasurer assemblies to retirement planning workshops

*“Now is the time for Massachusetts to lead and be the beacon of equity the rest of the country needs. At the federal level, we're seeing widespread cuts and broad executive orders that impact every single aspect of society. The lives of working families, children, those living in poverty, those with disabilities, the LGBTQ+ community, and immigrants are being upended to help finance tax cuts for the super wealthy.”*

— Brant Duncan, Secretary-Treasurer,  
AFT Massachusetts





## 2025 AFT Massachusetts Convention Keynote Speakers

# Ayanna Pressley

## Congresswoman (MA-07)

**A**yanna Pressley is an advocate, a policy-maker, an activist, and a survivor. On November 6, 2018, Ayanna was first elected to represent Massachusetts' 7th Congressional District in the U.S. House of Representatives, making her the first woman of color to be elected to Congress from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Pressley served as an at-large member of the Boston City Council from 2010 through 2019.

Ayanna believes that a diversity of voices in the political process is essential to crafting more effective public policy. Thanks in large part to her mother's dedication to activism, Ayanna has always been acutely aware of the role that government can play in lifting up families and communities.

In Congress, Ayanna has been dedicated to the kind of bold, activist leadership she emphasized throughout her groundbreaking campaign. She has introduced legislation to ensure fair compensation for low-wage workers, to support survivors of sexual assault and harassment, and to fundamentally reimagine our criminal legal system, among much else. And she has been a vocal advocate on behalf of our immigrant communities, led the creation of the Future of Transportation caucus, fought to protect critical reproductive rights, and to hold the White House accountable.



# Evelyn DeJesus

## AFT Executive Vice President



**S**ince 2019, Evelyn DeJesus has been the executive vice president of the 1.8 million-member AFT, the first Latino/a officer in the union's 109-year history. A skilled teacher and administrator, DeJesus is a forceful advocate for justice — undaunted and unafraid to speak truth to power.

Elected as an AFT vice president in 2014, she co-chairs the AFT Latino Issues Task Force and serves as the presiding officer of the AFT Asian American and Pacific Islander Task Force, the AFT LGBTQIA+ Task Force and the AFT Native American and Indigenous Task Force. In 2021, she joined the executive boards of the AFL-CIO and the Solidarity Center. At the AFL-CIO, she serves as co-chair on both the Racial Justice Task Force (and the Subcommittee on Reimagining Federated Bodies) and the Immigration Committee, and she serves on the executive board for the Maritime Trades Department.

DeJesus traveled an unexpected road from engaged parent to educator and trade unionist. When one of her daughters became ill during a school construction project, DeJesus publicly exposed the toxic environment, caused by asbestos. Her courageous whistleblowing actions led to the Great Asbestos Scandal of 1993 and a citywide shutdown of the schools until asbestos could be safely removed from school buildings.

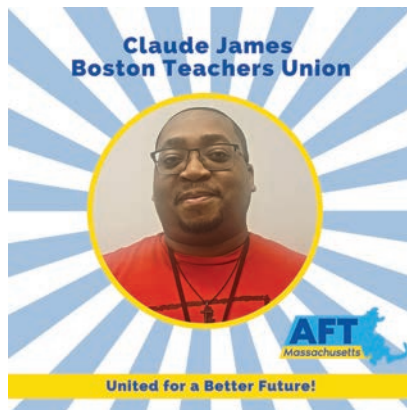




# Congratulations to our AFT Massachusetts 2025 Distinguished Service Award Recipients.

The AFT Massachusetts Distinguished Service Awards are presented annually to AFT Massachusetts members who have demonstrated an outstanding level of service and dedication to their local union.

**Non-licensed Member in the Pre-K to 12 system, vocational education, and school collaboratives (paraprofessional or school related-personnel PSRPs)**



**DESE Licensed Member in the Pre-K to 12 system**

**Municipal Librarian**



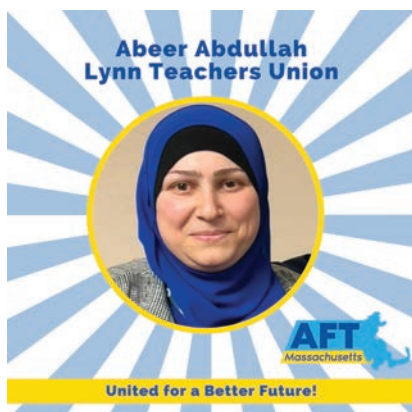
**Municipal Librarian**



**Retired Member**



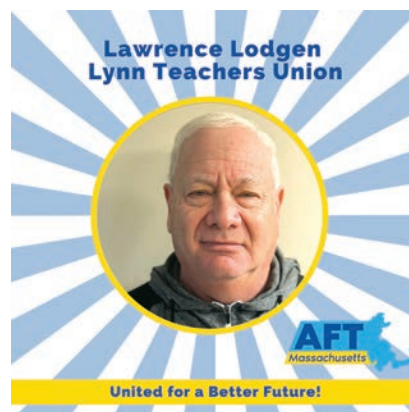
**Emerging Leader**



**Emerging Leader**



**Retired Member**







# Congratulations to our Massachusetts AFL-CIO 2025 Labor Scholarship Award Recipients.



All recipients will receive a \$2,000 scholarship award. Winners were selected based on their score on the Massachusetts AFL-CIO annual labor examination and must have a parent or guardian who is a dues-paying member from one of our AFT Massachusetts locals.

## **Kathleen A. Kelley Scholarship Award**

Eric Leipow, Billerica Memorial High School

## **Jay Porter, Scholarship Award**

Joshua Sidmore, Beverly High School

## **Albert Shanker Scholarship Award**

Cash Davis, Westford Academy High School • Ruby Davis, Westford Academy High School

Elizabeth Kurth, Chelmsford High School • Finn McConville, Braintree High School

Christian Serino, Lynn Vocational Technical High School

## **Sandra Feldman Scholarship Award**

Salim Gadiri, Chelmsford High School • Bradyn MacLean, Bishop Guertin High School

# Special President's Award

For years of advocacy, phone calls and letters to persuade Congress to pass the Social Security Fairness Act to eliminate the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) and the Government Pension Offset (GPO).







# AFTMA members come out in force on April 5th to rally for #handsoff Massachusetts.







# Chelsea educators secure historic new contract with living wages, humane benefits, and supports.

**A**fter 10 long months of negotiations, the educators in Chelsea will no longer be working without a contract. At a negotiation session on December 11th with over 200 members in attendance, the Chelsea Teachers Union (CTU) Local 1340 secured new, three-year collective bargaining agreements for their members that take important steps to address essential classroom issues while ensuring these dedicated educators are on track to receive a living wage and equitable workplace benefits.

The agreement includes competitive wage increases for all educators, including the largest wage increase for paraprofessionals that the district has ever seen. Paraprofessionals currently receiving \$17.96 an hour will see a 62 percent pay increase over the course of the three-year contract, up to \$29.05 per hour. Clerks will see a 31 percent increase over the life of the contract — going from \$27.99 to \$36.61 per hour. It also includes the first district-paid parental leave benefit (three weeks the first year of the contract and then six weeks in subsequent years), as well as up to 12 weeks paid leave for members to care for ill family members and up to 35 days from the sick bank.

## The contract establishes an alumni hiring incentive to empower CPS graduates to stay in the community as educators.

“Our priorities were living and competitive wages, humane leave policies, and equitable working and learning conditions. Not only did we achieve these priorities, we became so much stronger as a Union,” continued Anderson. Key provisions of this historic agreement center around supporting not only educators, but the entire Chelsea community, its students, and families.

The contract establishes an alumni hiring incentive to empower Chelsea Public Schools (CPS) graduates to stay in the community



as educators. The CTU joins just a handful of other local American Federation of Teachers Massachusetts unions across the state in securing new class size and caseload limits, an important step to ensure educators can provide the attention and specialized support their students need to thrive.

“We’re not just educators, we’re also community members — nearly 20 percent of our members call Chelsea home and this agreement reflects that. It makes it possible for members to start families and take enough time to bond with their babies. It will mean being able to care for sick family members. It incentivizes former CPS students like me to become teachers,” said **CTU Vice President and CPS Graduate Vanesa Mendoza-Mercado**. “When educators are able to bring our full selves to the classroom, students benefit.”

“For the first time, Chelsea’s paraprofessionals will receive a living wage — because teachers and clerks stood firmly with the paras as a united front,” said **Marilyn Moschella, CTU Paraprofessional Vice President and CPS Graduate**. “Paras are unsung heroes of the classroom, providing a foundation for students of all abilities to learn. The new competitive wages in this agreement will make a huge difference for all members, and will attract great educators to the district. The level of solidarity — from our teachers, clerks, and families — is what helped get this monumental agreement over the finish line.”

“As a parent, I see the work our educators put in each and every day to support the kids in Chelsea, including mine. I was proud to support the Chelsea Teachers Union every step of the way to secure better learning conditions for all, and the wages and benefits our educators deserve. At the end of the day, they were fighting for our families just as much as they were fighting for theirs,” said **Brianna Bolland-Peterson, a CPS graduate** with children at Kelly Elementary and Wright Science and Technology Academy.

*“The consequences of this agreement will be transformative, providing greater stability and support for our educators and our students. This is a win for the entire Chelsea community, and we couldn’t have done it without the sustained organizing and solidarity of educators, families, and community members.”*

— **Kathryn Anderson, President,  
Chelsea Teachers Union**







# Massachusetts residents vote for educational equity with Yes on Ballot Question 2.

*Creating stronger and more enriched learning opportunities for all students.*



AFT Massachusetts President Jessica Tang released the following statement in response to the overwhelming victory of Question 2 on the Massachusetts ballot, which calls for the elimination of the MCAS as a graduation requirement for high schools students in the state:



“Voters in Massachusetts gave students across the Commonwealth a brighter and stronger future. Massachusetts residents know that true learning is about much more than can be measured by a single standardized test and have now given teachers the ability to create safer and stronger learning environments where setting and meeting high standards is embedded in every aspect of a school’s curriculum.

This is an important step toward addressing the systemic opportunity gaps that are exacerbated by decades of over reliance on a one-size-fits-all standardized test.”



# Economic Development Bill makes great strides on educator diversity.

**T**he economic development bill passed by the Massachusetts Legislature today includes important steps to promote educator diversity throughout the Commonwealth, something the American Federation of Teachers Massachusetts has been working on for years.

Many of these proposals stem from the Educator Diversity Act, important legislation championed by the AFT Massachusetts and other education and community advocates since it was first introduced in 2021.

## Establishing guidelines to increase racial and ethnic diversity in public schools and districts.

“Research has shown time and time again that all students benefit from a diverse educator workforce — one that accurately reflects the wonderful diversity of our communities. We’ve spent years advocating for ways to increase diversity among our educators and we look forward to seeing our students benefit from the provisions included in this bill,” said **AFT Massachusetts President Jessica Tang**. “Today (November 14, 2024), the Legislature made an important commitment to increasing the number of diverse teachers in every district of the Commonwealth while also providing the workplace conditions to ensure their success, job satisfaction, and retention.”

The bill requires the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to establish guidelines to increase racial and ethnic diversity among teaching, administration, and staff positions in public schools and districts.

These policies must help school districts: (1) identify and eliminate discriminatory barriers to employment and education within the district; (2) recruit and hire members of under-represented groups; (3) develop, promote, and retain underrepresented members of the educator workforce; and (4) ensure equal opportunity in employment for educators.

## Additional components included in the economic development bill include:

- ◆ Requiring all districts to create plans to recruit and retain diverse educators, consistent with state-established guidelines;
- ◆ Increasing transparency around the diversity of the education workforce by requiring the collection of educator diversity data at both the state and local levels, which will be made publicly available;

- ◆ Requiring each school district to appoint a diversity, equity and inclusion officer or team charged with overseeing the district’s efforts around diversity, equity, and inclusion along with ensuring the district is acting in compliance with all state and federal laws;
- ◆ Calling for diversity and anti-bias training for all educators, school district employees, superintendents, school committee members, district leaders, and principals on a regular basis;
- ◆ Requiring educator preparation programs to implement plans to increase the diversity of program completers;
- ◆ Establishing a pilot program for a teacher apprenticeships; and
- ◆ Creating a pilot program for alternative pathways to teacher certification beyond the Massachusetts Tests for Educator Licensure (MTEL) exams.



## Removing barriers to educators of color and educators whose first language is not English.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the state provided alternatives for potential educators to use previous experiences and qualifications to help establish a pathway to licensures in place of some of the required MTEL exams. Under this legislation, DESE would be required to evaluate the role that alternative licensure processes play in increasing diversity rates and educators of color as the MTEls have been shown to create barriers to entry for educators of color and educators whose first language is not English.

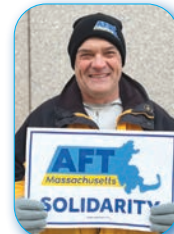
DESE would also be required to undertake an education and awareness campaign to promote to the public the available state scholarships and loan forgiveness programs for prospective educators — an important proposal considering student loan debt and the ability to pay for higher education continue to be a significant barrier in the efforts to attract diversity educators.

“All of our students deserve to have educators that they can relate to and that understand their histories and culture,” continued Tang, who is the first person of color to lead the AFT Massachusetts. “The state took important first steps today to address these issues and we look forward to continuing to partner with the Legislature, DESE, and other advocates to identify other ways to support the recruitment, success, and retention of diverse educators in every school across the state.”













# Join an AFT Massachusetts

Calling all members!! AFT Massachusetts is convening issue-based working groups for 2025. Each group will be member-run and will have an assigned AFT Massachusetts staff member to help facilitate and provide assistance.

In these working groups, participants will be able to connect with members from across the Federation on the issues most important to them, their schools, and their locals.

Please consider joining one today and bring your unique experience, expertise, and interest to the table! Those interested in joining a working group should contact their local president today!

*Climate Justice*

*Libraries*

*Paraprofessional and  
School-Related Personnel*

*Virtual and Digital Learning*

*Racial Diversity and Inclusion*

*Higher Education*

*VoTech | CTE*

*Retirees*

*Young Workers*

*Collaboratives and Charter Schools*

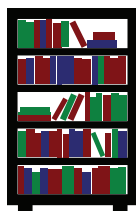
## Climate Justice

To advocate for policies and actions within the AFTMA schools and communities that will lessen the impact of climate change and facilitate a just transition to a fossil fuel-free future and to promote healthy, green, carbon free, modern workplaces for our members, students, clients, and patients.



## Libraries

Libraries play an essential role in our communities and became critical lifelines to information and public services for many during the pandemic. The challenges and environments library workers face are unique and this table will bring together library workers from across the Commonwealth to discuss their specific needs and issues.



## Paraprofessional and School-Related Personnel

Paraprofessional and School-Related Personnel serve as invaluable connections between educators, parents, students and the community — ensuring all children and their educators have what they need to thrive. Recently, PSRPs have seen tremendous wins, including historic wage increases, more supportive benefits, and establishing their roles and the respect they deserve in the schools and communities they serve. This group will focus on the specific needs of PSRPs and how we can build upon those recent wins to ensure a strong and supported PSRP workforce, which is critical to the success of our students and classrooms.



## Virtual and Digital Learning

Technology should be integrated into education with the primary purpose of improving teaching and learning, and digital tools must always enhance, not replace, the learning relationship between educators and their students. The working group will review the promise and potential of technology integration in education, highlighting effective examples, linking to essential research, and examining implications for students, educators, and administrators.



*Those interested in joining a*





# new 2025 Working Group.

## Racial Diversity and Inclusion

Research has shown time and time again that all students benefit from a diverse educator workforce — one that accurately reflects the wonderful diversity of our communities. We've seen some recent accomplishments at the state level with the passage of the Educator Diversity Act, but this work is far from over. This working group will serve as a collaborative space for all members to explore, discuss, and advance racial equity and inclusion within their workplaces and union locals.



## Higher Education

Higher education remains a critical component to economic mobility and access to public higher education will be crucial at a time when we face significant federal funding cuts to the programs and services that support working families. In order to support these students, we must ensure our institutions of higher education provide faculty and staff with the fair wages, benefits, and respect they deserve. This working group meets to build power collectively for justice in higher education for faculty, staff, and students. In addition, this group will chart a plan of action to fight the challenges of the new presidential administration, including the serious threats to immigrant and international students, the attack on academic freedom, and other critical issues.



## VoTech | CTE

All educators know the important role of VoTech and Career and Technical Education in the Commonwealth's education ecosystem. Considering the renewed focus on investment we're seeing at the state and local level, these schools and the opportunities they provide the next generation of Massachusetts workers, it's critical that we understand the specific needs and issues important to educators in these areas. This working group is especially tailored for any members currently working in VoTech or Career and Technical Education, but is also open to those interested in working in these areas.



## Retirees

All AFT Massachusetts members have a right to a dignified and secure retirement — a right our union fights to ensure each and every day. This working group will focus on the key issues our retirees face and what advocacy and changes are needed to improve the retirement security for current and future AFT Massachusetts retirees.



## Young Workers

We are facing a significant teaching shortage in this nation and, unfortunately, Massachusetts is not immune. With the teacher pay penalty, high costs of living, and burdensome levels of student loans, we see many gifted educators are forced to leave for more supportive positions. While we need serious action on the state and federal level to support teachers, we must also do our part to provide these colleagues with strong levels of support and guidance to help increase retention rates. This group will focus on identifying ways to thoughtfully engage the next generation of educators in our schools.



## Collaboratives and Charter Schools

This group will bring together AFT Massachusetts members working at any of our collaborative, charter schools, or other non-traditional public/private educational institutions. These schools — which lack conventional democratizing elements such as an elected school committee or elected public officials — face very unique challenges and serve unique populations. This group is dedicated to developing innovative strategies to effectively bargain local contracts while operating under anti-democratic governance structures and/or other issues identified by working group members.



**working group should contact their local president today!**





# Scenes from the 2025 AFTMA and Boston Teachers Union Paraprofessionals Conference.

*Saturday, March 30, 2025 - 8:30 am to 3:00 pm • Boston Teachers Union Hall*







# Educators at Community Charter School of Cambridge vote to form Union.

**E**ducators and staff at the Community Charter School of Cambridge (CCSC) today announced that they are forming a union with the American Federation of Teachers Massachusetts (AFTMA), joining a surge of union organizing at Massachusetts charter schools this year. The union will represent 66 teachers and other school employees at CCSC, which educates around 250 students in grades 6 – 12.



on the job, and all students deserve a healthy school environment that meets their diverse learning needs. CCSC employees are part of a powerful movement of charter school educators who are forming unions with AFT Massachusetts because they understand that when we organize together, we can build the schools and communities our students and their families deserve.”

## Finding hope that having a group voice will make each single voice better heard.

“I love teaching because I get to meet and learn from amazing young people every day while trying to be a guiding force in their lives,” said **Mallory Karlicek, a High School English Teacher at CCSC**. “I signed on to form a union because teachers felt they were being pressured to take on more responsibility without fair compensation. I wanted to lend my voice and support to ensure teachers are valued at our school, and I hope having a group voice will make each single voice better heard.”

“I’m excited to welcome the educators and staff at the Community Charter School of Cambridge to our AFT Union family! We are thrilled to support their organizing for better working and learning conditions,” said **AFT Massachusetts President Jessica Tang**. “All educators and school staff deserve a true voice

The new union at CCSC follows the announcement of new Unions at two Dorchester charter schools earlier this year: Neighborhood House Charter School, which formed a union in February, and Codman Academy Charter Public School, which formed a union in April. Both organized their unions with the Boston Teachers Union, a local affiliate of AFTMA. AFTMA also represents educators at the Cape Cod Lighthouse Charter School in Harwich.

## Supporting each other in contract negotiations.

“There’s a growing movement of charter school educators forming unions because we see the need to come together and organize for better working conditions and a voice on the job,” said **Jessica Cordero, an educator at Neighborhood House Charter School**. “We’re ready to support each other as we negotiate contracts that will help improve our jobs so we can better support our students.”

The employees of CCSC look forward to working with the school administration to reach a contract that delivers better working conditions for educators, addresses students’ classroom needs, and ensures a fair discipline process for employees.

“I love teaching because it’s transformative. Not only for the students, but for you too. I’ve grown so much as a person alongside these young people because I’m invested in becoming better for them,” said another teacher at CCSC. “I sought to form a union for several reasons, including teacher retention and due process around employee discipline. Too many people, especially men of color, are flippantly removed from our staff. Overall, no one can build relationships and achieve long-term academic goals if the staff is constantly turning over. I am hoping that through the collective bargaining process, we can achieve clarity and a sense of mutual respect. I want to be heard and listened to. Now, I feel like it will happen.”

*“I love teaching because I get to meet and learn from amazing young people every day while trying to be a guiding force in their lives. I signed on to form a union because teachers felt they were being pressured to take on more responsibility without fair compensation. I wanted to lend my voice and support to ensure teachers are valued at our school, and I hope having a group voice will make each single voice better heard.”*

— **Mallory Karlicek, High School English Teacher at CCSC**



# AFT Massachusetts celebrates passage of Social Security Fairness Act.

**O**n December 21, 2024, the U.S. Senate passed the Social Security Security Fairness Act to eliminate the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) and the Government Pension Offset (GPO) provisions of the Social Security law – which both unfairly penalize thousands of public sector retirees in Massachusetts, including school teachers.



paid off to ensure all workers have access to these benefits.”

In Massachusetts, WEP impacted nearly 93,000 Social Security beneficiaries including retirees, disabled workers, and spouses/children.

“Both of these provisions disproportionately impact low-income retirees — including tens of thousands in Massachusetts alone. It’s set up

“No one who pays into the Social Security system should see the benefits they’ve earned cut or eliminated – especially those who dedicated their careers to public service,” said **American Federation of Teachers Massachusetts President Jessica Tang**. “In addition to fair wages, reasonable benefits and safe working conditions, everyone deserves a secure and dignified retirement and we are pleased to say that after years of advocacy, our collective efforts

so public school teachers and paraprofessionals end up being penalized for working a second or third job in the private sector, which many have to do to get by,” said **AFT Massachusetts Secretary Treasurer Brant Duncan**. “On top of that, these provisions disenfranchise many from becoming educators as a second career – undoubtedly contributing to the national teacher shortage we’re facing.”

## Boston educators vote overwhelmingly to ratify historic union contract.

**T**he Boston Teachers Union (BTU) announced this evening that its members have voted overwhelmingly in favor of ratifying a historic new contract with the Boston Public Schools (BPS). After more than 45 bargaining sessions and more than a year, the agreement delivers key improvements to wages, inclusion supports, and working conditions.

“Together, we’ve secured critical investments in student support, meaningful wage increases for educators — especially for paraprofessionals — and an inclusion model that increases resources for students with special needs, as well as for educators. We strongly believe in a model that includes students with special needs in the general classroom, and these resources will help make that model more successful for the benefit of students and educators alike. This is a win for educators, students, parents, and our entire community,” said **Erik Berg, President of the Boston Teachers Union**.

“For years, paraprofessionals have done critical work supporting our district’s students, yet struggled to make ends meet. For quite some time, I’ve struggled with my own decision of remaining as a paraprofessional,” said **Tracy Romain, a paraprofessional at**

**Chittick Elementary School**. “These improvements are not just a victory for educators, but for the students we serve every day.”

The ratification follows months of grassroots organizing, advocacy, and public demonstrations, including informational picket lines and “walk-ins” at schools citywide. BTU educators mobilized with parents, students, and community members to push for a contract that not only improves wages and working conditions but also enhances educational opportunities for all Boston students.

*“We strongly believe in a model that includes students with special needs in the general classroom, and these resources will help make that model more successful for the benefit of students and educators alike”*

— Erik Berg, President, Boston Teachers Union







# AFT Massachusetts sues to stop the Federal Government's dismantling of public education.

**T**he American Federation of Teachers Massachusetts along with a broad coalition of educators, school districts, nonprofits, and labor unions took legal action to stop the Trump Administration's attempts to decimate the Department of Education and the critical services it provides to students, teachers, parents, and communities across the country.

The lawsuit — filed in the U.S. District Court for the District of Massachusetts by Democracy Forward — is the first since President Trump signed an Executive Order on March 20th to dismantle the Department.

## Federal law protects state and local control over public schools — from approving a school's curriculum to setting graduation requirements.

"Protecting access to public education is an important component of ensuring all children have the opportunity to succeed — a value most Americans hold dear and one that is crucial to our democracy. For nearly 50 years, the federal government has helped us ensure equal access, especially for those who have had access restricted throughout history — including low-income students in rural and urban areas, students with disabilities, and students learning English," said **AFT Massachusetts President Jessica Tang**. "Dismantling the federal government's role — whether it's by an illegal executive order or widespread firings to bring critical services and support to a halt — will cause the most harm to students with the greatest needs, greatly diminishing our ability to provide all children with a free and equal education. At the end of the day, the White House is not just illegally dismantling a department — they're dismantling the futures of millions of children and working families across the country."

Public schools are governed by their respective state and local education authority. Federal law protects state and local control over public schools — from approving a school's curriculum to setting graduation requirements. From distributing funds to help schools work with students with disabilities, to providing support and assistance to parents and families, protecting students' civil rights, and making sure higher education is affordable for deserving students, the Department of Education and the services and funding it provides is essential to the success of students and to ensuring equal access to quality public education.

Before the Executive Order was signed, the White House was already taking steps to dismantle the Department through

## Trump Administration Is Sued Over Push to Shut Education Department

The lawsuit accuses the government of dismantling the department by executive fiat without the required approval of Congress.



The lawsuit was filed in federal court in Massachusetts by the American Federation of Teachers, the American Association of University Professors and a pair of public school districts in Massachusetts. It comes four days after President Trump signed an executive order that directed the education secretary, Linda McMahon, to "take all necessary steps to facilitate the closure of the department."

**We'll see you in court.**  
**Sincerely,**  
**AFT Massachusetts**



massive layoffs — reducing the staff from 4,133 to 2,183. A nearly 50 percent cut of personnel means the loss of jobs working families rely on while causing severe disruptions in the delivery of critical services, harming students and schools across the nation.

In addition to the layoffs, the President's Executive Order and other administration statements have described the intent to close the Department and move Department programs and offices, such as the Office for Special Education Programs and Federal Student Aid, to different federal agencies with no relevant expertise or necessary resources.

## Lump sums of funding would not come with the accountability measures now in place.

Instead of targeted funding to ensure all students have access to equal educational opportunities in our public schools, the Trump Administration wants any federal funding to be provided to the states as block grants. These lump sums of funding would not come with the accountability measures current federal education funding has in place to ensure the money for specific programs and populations is going to those most in need.

"For decades, federal education funding has helped ensure students of all abilities and from all backgrounds have access to the same opportunities as their peers," continued President Tang. "Moving rarely have the means to afford them."



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# 2024 AFT Massachusetts Awards Dinner

Friday, May 3, 2024 • Edward M. Kennedy Institute for the United States Senate







# Educators, students, elected officials, & business leaders agreed: Vote Yes for South Shore Tech.

**V**oters in nine South Shore communities voted on Saturday, January 25, voted to support a new facility and expansion of South Shore Technical School (SST), which has been providing students and adults throughout the area with the skills to be successful members of the local workforce and regional economy for over six decades. First opened in 1962, SST is the second oldest vocational school in the state and is seen as a leader in vocational education in Massachusetts. Unfortunately, the dated infrastructure of the school means that 40 percent of applicants are turned away.



“Since they opened their doors, South Shore Tech has lived up to its mission of giving students the skills and support to fulfill their personal goals, bring them economic independence, and help establish themselves as impactful members of their community,” said **American Federation of Teachers President**

**Jessica Tang.** “SST is an integral part of the local community and regional economy that needs a long-overdue overhaul of its facilities in order to remain a successful and thoughtful leader in vocational education.”

## A critical investment in the next generation of workers and the greater South Shore economy.

The vote took place in Abington, Cohasset, Hanover, Hanson, Marshfield, Norwell, Rockland, Scituate, and Whitman and will allow the SST School Committee to move forward with plans for a new facility to support future workforce, increase access, and expand programming, leveraging \$110 million in state funding through the Massachusetts School Building Authority.

Education, business, and elected leaders from across the South Shore had endorsed the proposal as a critical investment in the next generation of workers and the greater South Shore economy for decades to come.

*“Through hands-on learning and skills training, SST produces not only successful and skilled workers, but our graduates are also known for being engaged learners, hopeful citizens, and responsible members of their local, national, and global communities.”*

— **Randy Scott, President,  
South Shore Regional Vocational  
Teachers Federation**



“Through hands-on learning and skills training, SST produces not only successful and skilled workers, but our graduates are also known for being engaged learners, hopeful citizens, and responsible members of their local, national, and global communities,” said **Randy Scott, President of the South Shore Regional Vocational Teachers Federation.** “Voting YES allows us to expand with new programming and serve more students. This is about more than just getting bigger — it’s about being able to maintain the same level of quality education we are known for, which is at risk with the crumbling facilities.”

## Locals know SST for its successful night program serving veterans and the underemployed.

For every five tradespeople that retire, only one is replaced with a recent graduate. Not only will the new school be able to graduate more students — opening the door to economic opportunity to hundreds more each year — but it would also add new programs for plumbers and veterinary technicians.

SST’s commitment to the community and its residents is unparalleled. Locals also know it for its incredibly successful night program serving veterans and the underemployed. Right now, over 80 percent of the night school graduates are employed by over 40 local businesses in the 9 districts served by SST.





# Scenes from the AFT Massachusetts 2024 Convention







# Lynn families, elected officials, and Union leaders celebrate State Board's vote against dangerous charter school expansion proposal.

**B**oard of Elementary and Secondary Education Board members today voted 6-to-4 against a recommended expansion application from KIPP Academy Lynn Charter School, which had been recommended by the Acting Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education even though it did not meet the regulatory requirement threshold of being a “proven provider” according to the department’s own data.

“Today, the Board upheld the regulations in place to ensure that our most vulnerable students’ needs were being considered and protected. Had they not stepped in, this proposal would have not only caused irreparable harm to the Lynn Public Schools and the students they serve. It would have set a very dangerous precedent, especially in our most at-risk communities, by not holding KIPP to the same requirements and regulations all other charter schools must meet when seeking to expand under the current law,” said **American Federation of Teachers President Jessica Tang**, who represents 25,000 educators and public school employees around the state, including 2,300 educators, paraprofessionals, and therapists in the Lynn Public Schools (LPS).

“We thank the members of the board who voted against the proposal for listening to the many students, teachers, community members, elected officials, and union leaders who voiced opposition to the application to expand. We believe it should never have moved forward to a vote of the Board in the first place and are grateful to board members who understood the concerns.”

## Proposal would take away an additional \$8 million a year from Lynn Public Schools.

The proposal called for an additional 450 seats for KIPP Academy Lynn, taking away \$8 million a year from LPS — on top of the \$30 million the district already loses annually to charter schools.

To expand at the level KIPP was seeking, they would need to be considered a proven provider under state law. This requires the school to have proficiency levels similar to state averages over no less than a three-year period for all students. They also must meet the specific needs of the community, particularly disadvantaged students including English language learners, students with disabilities, and low-income students. According to our analysis of the Department’s own data, KIPP Academy Lynn does not meet these requirements.

*“Just like they’re not supposed to cherry pick their students, charter schools cannot cherry pick what data they want the state to consider. They must be declared a proven provider in terms of proficiency of their students and their ability to serve a student body that truly reflects the community they’re in.”*

— **Sheila O’Neil, President,  
Lynn Teachers Union**



From the very beginning, the AFT Massachusetts has stood with community leaders in opposition to KIPP Academy Lynn’s expansion plan, including Lynn Mayor Jared Nicholson, Lynn Public Schools Superintendent Evonne Alvarez, Ed.D., and Lynn Teachers Union President Sheila O’Neil.

## The requirements are supposed to make sure our schools most in need are protected.

“Just like they’re not supposed to cherry pick their students, charter schools cannot cherry pick what data they want the state to consider. They must be declared a proven provider in terms of proficiency of their students and their ability to serve a student body that truly reflects the community they’re in,” said **Lynn Teachers Union President Sheila O’Neil**. “And the state cannot pick and choose when and where it applies the law. These requirements are supposed to make sure our schools most in need are protected. While we are happy with the outcome, we remain bewildered as to why a plan that would have stripped these protections from the schools in Lynn and the kids they serve got this far.”

A letter to Acting Elementary and Secondary Education Commissioner Russell Johnston from Mayor Nicholson, Superintendent Alvarez, and President O’Neil clearly outlined their opposition on grounds that KIPP Academy Lynn is not a proven provider.



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# Scenes from the AFT 2024 National Convention







# Northshore educators kick-off negotiations, calling for stronger collaboration to support and protect the region's most vulnerable students.

**E**ducators across the Northshore Education Consortium (NEC) held unity events at all six schools yesterday to highlight their commitment to their students and their efforts to create a more collaborative decision-making process between stakeholders to ensure a brighter future for students, families, and their dedicated teachers and paraprofessionals.



The day marked the beginning of negotiations between the Northshore Education Consortium Employees Federation (NECEF) Local 4293 with NEC's Board of Directors to secure a new collective bargaining agreement for the nearly 300 teachers and instructional aides they represent. At each school, educators came together in solidarity, speaking to the needs of their students as a strong motivating factor during these upcoming negotiations. NECEF educators work with the region's most vulnerable students and remain dedicated to ensuring their right to a free and equal education is protected.

## Working to ensure students have access to the services and support they need to achieve social and educational success.

"There is no question that the challenges facing our schools and public education in general will disproportionately impact the most vulnerable students and those with the highest needs — and those are the students we serve," said **NECEF President and Recovery High School teacher Jake Zeigler**. "Across all six schools, our educators work to ensure these students have access to the services and support they need to achieve social and educational success. We are all dedicated to safeguarding the rights and needs of our students and remain steadfast in our commitment to making sure the voices and concerns of our students, their families, and our educators are heard and prioritized in the decision-making process."

Walk-ins were held at the Kevin O'Grady School, the Northshore Academy Upper School, the Northshore Academy Lower School, and the SOAR/EMBARK Programs, while educators at Recovery High School and Topsfield Vocational Academy held afternoon rallies.

With six separate schools serving nearly 500 students, the NEC is the largest provider of special education programs for children with emotional, behavioral, and developmental disabilities on the North Shore.

Sending districts include: Beverly, Danvers, Gloucester, Hamilton-Wenham, Ipswich, Lynn, Lynnfield, Manchester/Essex, Marblehead, Masconomet Regional, Nahant,

North Reading, Peabody, Pentucket Regional, Reading, Rockport, Salem, Swampscott, Tri-Town School Union, and Triton Regional.

"Each and every day, our paraprofessionals go above and beyond for their students, but most of us don't make a living wage. We're forced to choose between a job we love where we can support students in need and making ends meet. Paras shouldn't be forced to work multiple jobs just to put food on the table," said **Ketty Thebaud, Vice President of the NEC Paraprofessionals and an Instructional Assistant at the Kevin O'Grady School**. "We truly care for these kids and are invested in providing them the support to reach their full potential. We wouldn't want it any other way. We hope that, moving forward, we will be seen and recognized for our value and provided with a living wage and benefits that accurately reflect the role we play in the success of our students."

Many NEC educators are currently paid below a living wage. The collective bargaining agreements covering NECEF members are slated to expire on August 31, 2025.

*"We are all dedicated to safeguarding the rights and needs of our students and remain steadfast in our commitment to making sure the voices and concerns of our students, their families, and our educators are heard and prioritized in the decision-making process."*

— **Jake Zeigler, NECEF President and Recovery High School teacher**





# Executive Board Members and Staff

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# SUMMER ORGANIZING INSTITUTE 2025!



# SIGN UP TODAY

August 13th & 14th



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**SCAN TO REGISTER**



If you have any questions email  
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