



CPS
18 Tremont Street, Suite 320, Boston, MA 02108
Phone: 617-227-3000
Fax: 617-227-3453
lisa.guisbond@gmail.com
www.citizensforpublicschools.org

Legislation for the 2017-2018 Session that we support:

[S.308 - "An Act strengthening and investing in our educators, students and communities"](#) - Sponsored by Senator Mike Rush and 102 other legislators. S.308:

1. Updates the Foundation Budget (Chapter 70 Education Aid) formula based on the recommendations of the bi-partisan Foundation Budget Review Commission (2015). This overdue update of the formula, which dates to 1993, increases funding to help schools meet the needs of all students. Increases would take effect in 2019, after passage of the Fair Share Constitutional Amendment, which earmarks nearly \$2 billion in new revenues for public education and transportation.
2. Places a moratorium on the high stakes uses of state standardized tests, including rating teachers based on student performance. Standardized test overuse and misuse have hurt our most vulnerable students, focusing students on passing tests, rather than learning, educators on teaching to the test, rather than good teaching, and our schools on meeting state requirements that don't measure what parents and communities value in education. The bill provides a three-year pause on the high-stakes use of standardized tests, while a broad-based Commission examines how to design an accountability and assessment system that supports, rather than undermines, struggling schools.
3. Mandates daily recess for students K through 5th Grade, at least 20 minutes. Recess is one of many important programs that have been eliminated or reduced by over-testing.
4. Supports English Language Learners by giving school districts flexibility to provide English language programs that fit their students best, rather than being limited to the one-size-fits-all sheltered English Immersion program mandated by current law.

[H.2860 - An Act clarifying parental rights in the administration of standardized tests.](#)

Sponsored by Rep. Liz Malia - Clarifies current law that parents have the right to opt their children out of certain testing requirements, and sets out protections to ensure that parents may exercise these important parental rights.

[S.223 - An Act modernizing the foundation budget for the 21st century](#), filed by Senator Sonia Chang-Diaz - Similar language to S.308 (above) on updating the foundation budget.

[H.2844 - An Act to place a moratorium on high stakes testing](#), filed by Rep. Marjorie Decker. Similar language to SD.1486 (above) on a moratorium on high stakes testing.

[S.298 - An Act relative to local approval for charter schools](#), filed by Senator Michael Moore. Requires local approval for any new Commonwealth charter schools.

[HD.2760 - An Act to ensure charter school transparency and public accountability](#), filed by Rep. Frank Smizik. Requires charters to comply with same laws as regular public schools.

Two problematic bills:

[S.279: An Act relative to innovation partnership zones](#), filed by Senator Eric Lesser

This bill would allow the state Commissioner and Board of Elementary and Secondary Education to give control of schools to state-appointed boards that are not democratically accountable to residents. It applies to any district that has at least one school in level 4 or 5 of the state's 5-level rating system. These include Athol-Royalston, Boston, Fall River, Lawrence, New Bedford, Springfield, and Worcester. Anywhere from two to all of a district's schools could be given over to this board, not just level 4 or 5 schools.

The bill also allows School Committees themselves to give control of their schools to an appointed board if the district includes just one level 3 school. Roughly one fifth of the state's schools are in level 3. Again, this zone can include any district school, not just those in level 3.

An "Innovation Partnership Zone" is two or more schools in a district controlled by an appointed board with autonomy over staffing, budget, curriculum, and schedule.

There are two ways an Innovation Partnership Zone could be created:

On the initiative of the Education Commissioner, in any district with a level 4 school. The Commissioner appoints the board of directors, which draws up a plan. Changes to the union contract are negotiated, but if there is no agreement, the Commissioner has final say.

On the initiative of the School Committee in a district with a level 3 school. An individual or group draws up a plan, which includes the names of the zone's board of directors. The plan goes to a "screening committee" made up of representatives of the School Committee chair, the superintendent, and the union. The plan needs just two of the three votes, so the union can be overruled. Contract changes must be negotiated, and disagreements are decided by an arbitrator, but the decision must be consistent with the Innovation Partnership Zone plan – which requires no union approval.

[H.304 An Act to promote autonomy and success in schools](#), filed by Rep. Alice Peisch

This bill includes the Innovation Partnership Zone provisions of S.279. It also contains provisions that essentially expand the number of schools subject to level 4 sanctions from the current four percent of the state's schools to ten percent.

H.304 does this by creating a new category, "priority" schools, which the Commissioner selects from schools with low state ratings. In priority schools, unions and school committees must bargain waivers to the contract – even before a turnaround plan is developed. If teachers vote down the waivers, the Commissioner can put the school into level 4, where management can change the contract unilaterally.

Citizens for Public Schools believes that democratic control and union safeguards are not obstacles, but are *essential* to quality education. No new laws are needed for school districts to grant autonomy to schools. Boston does that now for its pilot schools.

These bills would create new charter-like schools, after voters overwhelmingly defeated a ballot question to expand charters. They are the kinds of proposals we would expect from Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos, not from public education supporters.