



**Statement of the Massachusetts Bankers Association
In Support of H 473, S 327 & S 328
Relative to Financial Literacy and Personal Finance Curriculum in Public Schools
Joint Committee on Education
October 10, 2023**

On behalf of our more than 120 commercial, savings and cooperative banks and federal savings institution members with more than 72,000 employees and over five million customers located throughout the Commonwealth and New England, we are writing to express our support for H 184, H 473, S 327 & S 328 that will further enhance and encourage the implementation of a financial literacy and personal finance curriculum in Massachusetts public schools.

The challenges facing today's young adults are greater than ever, especially when it comes to managing their finances. Our local, national and international economies continue to deal with enormous change and stress as we attempt to recover from the pandemic. Today's financial services markets are far more complex and competitive than ever, and consumers of all ages and backgrounds need to be educated on the differences in various products and services, how they work and how to determine which best meet their needs and help them reach their goals.

Studies suggest that a college graduate today, on average, will borrow more than \$825,000 in their lifetime for homes, motor vehicles, college tuition, credit cards, and other reasons. Are these students prepared to make educated and informed decisions on what loans, bank accounts, investments and retirement plans are best suited to their needs? Most studies suggest they are not. All of these bills before this committee today address this issue by expanding financial education in our public schools and we applaud all of their sponsors for filing these important pieces of legislation.

Massachusetts banks and banks across the nation several years ago recognized the substantial need to provide financial education services to many audiences, but especially students. Our Association and dozens of Massachusetts banks have actively participated in programs with local schools such as Savings Makes Sense created by the State Treasurer, the FDIC Money Smart Program, *JumpStart*, operating branches in local high schools and the *Credit Smarts* program initiated by the Office of Consumer Affairs, among others. Many banks are also active supporters of Credit for Life fairs in their local high schools and now virtually. At these fairs, students are engaged in hands-on interactive lessons that prepare them for the demands of balancing their income and expenses and making sound financial decisions that impact their future.

While financial literacy education has been voluntarily offered for decades, it has not been an integral part of most public-school curriculum, usually just offered in economics or related classes, if at all. Unfortunately, financial literacy programs many times depend on the initiative of a local teacher or principal. Nationally, at least twenty-one (21) states require students to take a course in financial literacy to graduate from high school while at least forty (40) require financial literacy standards for grades 9-12. States across the nation, despite severe fiscal and time challenges, recognize the importance of incorporating financial literacy curriculum into K-12 education and we believe Massachusetts should join this growing list.

We appreciate the opportunity to support the objectives envisioned by these proposals and encourage this committee to work toward broad expansion of financial education in the most expeditious and fiscally prudent way possible.