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# FACULTY STAFF UNION, INC.

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September 13, 2023

Dear Committee Members,

The University of Massachusetts Boston Faculty Staff Union (FSU) Executive Committee wholeheartedly endorses the Cherish Act.

As faculty and librarians at a university with one of the most diverse undergraduate student bodies in New England, we have directly experienced the continued erosion of state funding. Proper funding is necessary to ensure the student success of which we are dedicated.

Over 60% of our students are the first in their family to attend higher education, about 30% of undergraduates are over the age of 23 years old, many live in households where English is the second language, and over half receive Pell grants. Each group has special needs which without support hinder their success and hence graduate rates. For instance, studies commissioned by the Massachusetts Department of Education have found high levels of food insecurity and housing insecurity among our students. All of this was worsened by the pandemic which added the burden of costly technology on students.

Student success also requires that students have the time to become engaged in their classes and within the university community. Many of our students work over 25 hours per week. They rush out of class to go to work, or they arrive tired for morning classes due to a late-night shift. Immersion into their academics and college life does not happen. They deal with the push-pull of attending classes and completing assignments on time and the need to work to pay the increasing cost of tuition and fees.

The Cherish Act funds will reduce student stress. They can truly be university students. Their classes and community engagement will be their priority and not the exception. Each student will genuinely have the chance to be all they can be. The Cherish Act funds can provide necessary and expanded teaching programs and services for all our students. Cherish allows us to recruit and retain faculty at the cutting edge of their disciplines, provide more advising and pay advisors a competitive salary.

Almost seventy-five percent of UMass alumni remain in Massachusetts. They are the Commonwealth's future. We need to today put in place policies that ensure Massachusetts remains at the forefront of technology, education and healthcare industries. This can only be done through investing in today's students.

Sincerely,

*The Executive Committee of the FSU*