

**Testimony before the Secretary of Education's  
Commission on the Future of Higher Education  
Catherine A. Boudreau, President  
Massachusetts Teachers Association  
Testifying on behalf of the National Education Association**

**Boston, Massachusetts  
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**My name is Catherine Boudreau, President of the Massachusetts Teachers Association, which represent more than 100,000 public education employees and 27 of the 28 public higher education institutions in Massachusetts, preK-graduate school.**

**Today I am also testifying on behalf of our national union, the National Education Association, which represents 2.8 million education employees.**

**We appreciate this opportunity to share our broad vision of the future of higher education in the United States. In addition, NEA will be submitting written material that deals with these issues, as well. I will be covering some issues with with some recommendations:**

**1. *Support the concept of higher education as a public good, not just an individual benefit.***

**We all benefit from the public effects of education. Members of an educated society are more likely to vote, raise healthier children, volunteer, and provide skills to the community. Higher education should not be reduced to *just* career training or *just* to responding to the workforce demands of industry.**

2. *Ensure that higher education is accessible and affordable.*

Higher education has never been more important. Yet, at a time when more and more worthwhile jobs require post-secondary education, only about 25 percent of our adult population has Bachelor degrees, and only 60 percent of high school graduates go on to some form of higher education.

We need to increase the government's role in the funding of higher education. Low-income families have been losing economic ground and have found it increasingly difficult to send their children to college. Student grant aid has not kept up with the increasing price of attendance. One important financial aid resource for the poorest students has been the Pell Grant program.

When this program was created, the maximum grant covered 84 percent of the cost of a public four-year college. Today, it covers only 39 percent.

The president's budget for FY07 freezes the Pell Grant maximum at the current \$4,050 level for the fifth year in a row.

The budget also makes the largest dollar cut to federal education funding in the history of the Education Department. These trends need to be reversed.

As our society becomes increasingly diverse, we need to make sure that opportunities for higher education are available to *not just* high school graduates, but to *all citizens* from *all segments* of our society.

I do not have to tell you that higher education is crucially important to our nation. According to "Shaping the Future: The Economic Impact of Public Universities," by the National Association of State Universities and Land Grant

**Colleges, “...the average return on every \$1 invested in a state university or land grant college is \$5 and every \$100 spent by an institution generates another \$138 in additional individual spending.”**

**The buzzer went off, and I said thank you.**

**The remainder of the testimony is in the submission.**