



To: Members of the Massachusetts Community College Council  
(MCCC)

From: Merrie Najimy, MTA President  
Max Page, MTA Vice President

Dear MCCC/MTA Members,

We are writing to you at a moment of great peril but also unprecedented opportunity for faculty, staff, and students across Massachusetts' community colleges. Having won stable funding through the pandemic, having brought new attention to the needs in public higher education, and having won new funds from the federal government, together we have created the possibility of a major reinvestment in public higher education, with community colleges a key focus. We look forward to building more collective action with you to lead to more victories.

MCCC, along with all MTA higher ed local unions, is in contract negotiations, and together we are pursuing key legislation and funding initiatives in the Massachusetts legislature that can directly improve the lives of MCCC members and that of your students. That is why we need unity and solidarity, now more than ever.

Unfortunately, at this very moment, MCCC leaders are pursuing the possibility of disaffiliating from the MTA -- that is, leaving the MTA to be an unaffiliated union, or have no union at all. Recent discussions of your MCCC Board, the hiring of an attorney, and the most recent MCCC newsletter, along with a "Fact Sheet" document circulated by some MCCC leaders, is alarming to us and to MCCC members. These actions are causing confusion and a rift at a time when transparency, democracy, and, most of all, solidarity, are needed.

We write to you to fill in missing information, share our thoughts, and invite you into a conversation about the work ahead.

### **Communications between MCCC and MTA**

MTA received a letter from an attorney that MCCC leadership retained to ask for "mediation" with MTA in late April. We responded in May, again in June, and now again in July that we would welcome a meeting with MCCC leadership at any time to discuss concerns and how best to advance the needs and interests of MCCC/MTA members across the community college system. In our capacity as MTA leaders we regularly meet with local leaders and members across the state and welcome the opportunity to do so with MCCC leaders and members. We have a meeting scheduled with MCCC President Margaret Wong and Vice President Rosemarie Freeland in August.

### **Setting the Record Straight on MTA Services**

In the "Fact Sheet" from the MCCC leaders, there was a lot of misinformation that we would like to set the record straight on.

**Field Staff.** Even though MCCC pays less in dues to the MTA now than it has in many years, MTA has increased the level of support given to the MCCC. Starting in January 2021, MTA increased field support and now has three full-time field representatives assigned exclusively to the MCCC.

Historically, there were between 1.5 and 2 reps assigned. The three full-time field reps is more than any other local in the state. In addition, MTA created a new Bargaining Campaign Strategy Team which provides research and campaign support to locals. A member of this team led negotiations leading to MCCC's first comprehensive salary scale.

**Legal Services.** The MTA legal division includes 11 attorneys, 2 paralegals, and legal secretaries and support staff and, when needed, employs outside firms to handle specialty matters. So far in 2021, MCCC has made – and been provided -- 39 formal requests for legal services including legal suits, arbitrations, mediations, and unfair labor practice proceedings -- significantly more than any other MTA local.

**Government Relations & Lobbying.** The MTA Government Relations staff draft legislation, draft testimony for legislative hearings, lobby legislators, and support MCCC members in each of these activities to advance a legislative agenda that improves conditions for MCCC members and students. This year that agenda specifically includes bills that would improve adjuncts pay and benefits, expand the Student Success fund in order to hire more faculty and staff, and build towards a debt-free future for higher education, with a focus on our working class students, a large percentage of which attend community colleges. With declining enrollment at our community colleges -- which started a number of years ago and will continue -- it is crucial for our members' livelihoods to boost enrollment.

**Additional Areas of Support.** MTA provides training and support to all local union treasurers, including the MCCC. MTA develops communications materials and strategies for MCCC upon request. MTA's Training division provides union skills training, conferences, and professional development for all MCCC/MTA members throughout the year. MTA provides individualized retirement counseling for MCCC members. And, through MTAB (MTA Benefits), MCCC members are eligible for member-only benefits including dental insurance, disability insurance, credit and student loan debt counseling, along with many other discounts

### **Setting the Record Straight on Member Democracy**

MCCC members participate at all levels of the MTA including the MTA Annual Meeting where the annual budget and MTA dues rates are established; serve on the MTA Board of Directors; serve on the national board of the NEA; and serve on 9 formal MTA committees, and many more informal task forces and working groups. Your president and vice president are represented in a number of these union spaces, including the MTA Board. In short, MCCC members have all the rights of MTA members generally and run for office and fully participate in all the activities of the MTA.

### **Setting the Record Straight on Dues**

MCCC leadership claims to send \$2.5 million annually to MTA. The reality is that MCCC sends less than half that amount to MTA (\$1,106,336.11 in 2020 -2021). However, MTA also provides \$87,000 in direct subsidies to MCCC, which in addition to grants and stipends, reduces MCCC's net remittance to less than \$1 million.

MTA members democratically establish the MTA dues rates each year at the MTA annual meeting. MCCC delegates, like delegates from all MTA locals, attend that meeting and set the budget and dues for MTA. Those dues apply to all MTA locals, including MCCC. Each local, however, is free to set its own local dues rate – and the MCCC local dues are higher than any other MTA local. MCCC local dues for full-time faculty and staff are \$332. By contrast, MSP (Massachusetts Society of Professors) members at UMass -- who have higher pay than most in our unions -- pay \$258 in local dues. Members have the right to understand the MCCC local budget and ask questions of the MCCC Board to help them decide if it is best suited to addressing a central challenge: how to get those few thousand non-members to join the MCCC. The MCCC leadership claims to have 5000 members. However, as of the Spring of 2021, the membership is actually 3745.

### **Unity Not Division, Solidarity Not Schisms**

We are proud of the MTA and all the work of its 115,000 members and more than 400 locals. We are proud of the MCCC and their stance for member and student justice. We are proud of the staff and services that MTA provides to the MCCC. During the pandemic we worked with all of you to win level funding, despite threats of massive cuts this past fall. We supported members at STCC and Quinsigamond who fought -- and won! -- against program cuts. Across the system, MTA staff supported the work of MCCC members to defend their members and their campuses. We weathered a terrible year and are now poised to seek a dramatic reinvestment in public higher education, and greater justice for MCCC members.

We know that there is always room for improvement. That is why we welcome your ideas, your feedback, your organizing, your creativity, and wisdom. Together, all together, we can step up to this historically unique moment of opportunity for all MCCC faculty and staff and win the improvements that are long overdue. But we can only do so if we remain united and if we increase our strength. We look forward to continuing this journey, this struggle, with you and look forward to chapter meetings with you all in the coming weeks and months.

In solidarity,  
Merrie and Max