



# PIONEER YOUNG PROFESSIONALS NEWSLETTER

FALL 2020



PIONEER INSTITUTE  
FOR PUBLIC POLICY  
RESEARCH

## INSIDE THIS NEWSLETTER

**A NOTE FROM LAUREN CORVESE, ANNUAL FUND DIRECTOR**

In order to continue to promote education and civic discourse, Pioneer Institute has remained a prominent voice in Massachusetts policy debates through our COVID-19-related research and digital programming, which we are pleased to share with you in this Fall 2020 edition of our Pioneer Young Professionals (PYP) Newsletter.

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# VIRTUAL EVENTS

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to many changes in our lives, forcing us into a period of uncertainty. With both a global pandemic and a national Presidential election occurring simultaneously, Pioneer Institute has accelerated our research and programming so that you, our loyal community of supporters and young professionals, have the resources to stay informed on the most current issues of our day.

We invite you to take a moment, press play, and learn more by viewing our collection of digital programming, Pioneer Virtual Policy Briefings, hosted this fall. In this webinar series, the Institute has covered a range of timely issues, from an investigation on nearly \$300 million in special needs student funding withheld by the state to a debate on the merits of ranked choice voting in future elections. We encourage you to review these discussions below!



## HARDEST-HIT INDUSTRIES: REBUILDING RESTAURANTS, RETAIL, AND TRAVEL & HOSPITALITY

FEATURING MARY CONNAUGHTON

A **recent study** released by Pioneer examined three of the industries hardest-hit by the pandemic: restaurants, retail, and travel and hospitality. In a briefing held on July 29th by Mary Connaughton, Pioneer's Director of Government Transparency, the Institute discussed the strategies outlined in our report to increase business viability and employment in these industries both during and after the COVID-19 outbreak. Here Connaughton presented a list of policy actions that can best aid businesses which rely largely on in-person gatherings and assist in getting people back to work.

You can view Connaughton's briefing on *Hardest-Hit Industries: Rebuilding Restaurants, Retail, and Travel and Hospitality* [here](#).

# VIRTUAL EVENTS

## POST-ESPINOZA STRATEGIES & UNLOCKING FEDERAL FUNDS FOR RELIGIOUS SPECIAL NEEDS STUDENTS

FEATURING TIM KELLER

For over a decade, the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's legal office has perpetuated an unaccountable and legally questionable culture within its department by denying services and government aid to students with disabilities attending parochial schools, citing an antiquated legal barrier known as the Blaine Amendments. In Massachusetts alone, as many as 16 percent of private school students may qualify for federally funded special education services, however only 1 percent of these students have seen any aid.

In a briefing held on September 23rd, Pioneer was pleased to host Tim Keller, Senior Attorney at the Institute for Justice, for a discussion on the impact of the *Espinoza v. Montana Department of Revenue* ruling as it relates to the state's withholding of federal funds from parochial schools, and how to possibly remedy these wrongs that negatively impact thousands of special needs students in Massachusetts.

You can view Keller's briefing on *Post-Espinoza Strategies & Unlocking Federal Funds for Religious Special Needs Students* [here](#).



## UNDERSTANDING YOUR VOTE ON QUESTION #2: RANKED CHOICE VOTING

FEATURING GREG DENNIS & LEE GOODMAN

In this past November election, Massachusetts voters took up a ballot question that had the power to fundamentally reshape the way our state votes. Under a system called "ranked-choice voting," races that involve more than two candidates allow voters the option to numerically rank their choices.

In a briefing held on October 28th, Pioneer was pleased to host Greg Dennis, Policy Director for Yes On 2, and Lee Goodman, former Chairman and Commissioner of the Federal Election Commission (FEC), for a debate on the basics of Massachusetts Ballot Question #2 to explain what ranked choice voting is, how it works, and the benefits and challenges that this potential new system presents to Massachusetts voters. We hope our members felt better prepared to cast an informed vote in this election.

You can view Dennis and Goodman's briefing on *Understanding Your Vote on Question 2: Ranked Choice Voting* [here](#).

# VIRTUAL EVENTS

## REGISTER NOW! PRINCIPLES FOR EFFECTIVE DIGITAL LEARNING

FEATURING MICHAEL HORN

Digital learning is the K-12 innovation of the 21st century and more important to families and schoolchildren during the COVID-19 crisis than any education policy topic.

We hope that you will **join us for our free webinar, *Principles for Effective Digital Learning*, on November 18th at 3:00 PM.** Pioneer is proud to host nationally-recognized digital schooling expert Michael Horn, co-founder of the Clayton Christensen Institute for Disruptive Innovation, who will be joined by Pioneer's Jamie Gass to discuss the best practices drawn from virtual learning and the promise of disruptive innovation.

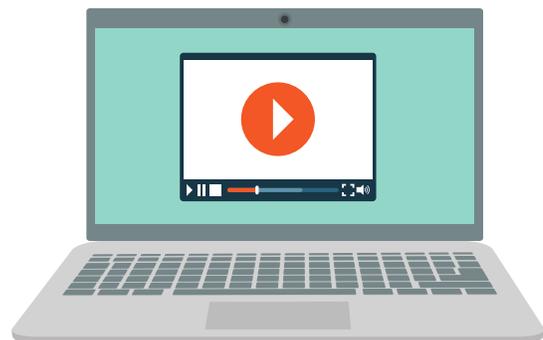
Register for *Principles for Effective Digital Learning* [here](#).



## THERE IS MORE VIRTUAL PROGRAMMING TO COME!

This coming year brings a number of key events and opportunities to get involved with Pioneer Institute. We are currently hard at work to **reshape our annual Hewitt Healthcare Lecture and Lovett C. Peters Lecture** in a digital space.

Keep an eye out for virtual events like this, programming that is available to our PYPs, in Spring 2021!



# RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

The coronavirus pandemic has affected all of us, resulting in losses of jobs, freedom of movement, civil liberties, and many of our loved ones. While prompt measures to protect Massachusetts residents are necessary at this time, policies must also be accountable, focused, and effective.

To that end, Pioneer Institute's team has launched a dynamic research agenda to guide decisive policy action during this crisis, while also addressing other healthcare, education, economic, and transportation-related issues that existed prior to the outbreak. It's through these investigations that the Institute remains a go-to source of data-driven policy solutions on today's current issues and we encourage you to read more on the work done by our four research centers below!

## THE INSTITUTE ON GOVERNOR BAKER'S NEW COVID-19 RESTRICTIONS

### PUBLIC STATEMENT

On November 6th, new executive orders were put into effect by Massachusetts due to the recent spike in COVID-19 cases in the state.

Governor Charlie Baker's new order includes a limit on the size of gatherings in private homes to no more than 10 people, the closure of certain businesses by 9:30 p.m., a requirement for face coverings in open outdoor spaces even if social distancing measures are adhered to, and a stay-at-home advisory from 10:00 p.m. through 5:00 a.m. with only certain exceptions.

There are four things the Institute believes the Governor must change to these restrictions: The order must distinguish guests from residents in a household, focus on improving business compliance with COVID-19 protocols rather than limiting the hours of operation, lift face mask requirements when socially distant in open outdoor spaces, and rethink the fines of \$500 (or more) which are unreasonable. For more information on Pioneer's public statement, visit our [website](#).



# RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

## ECONOMIC RECOVERY FROM COVID-19 WILL REQUIRE SHORT-TERM RELIEF, LONG-TERM REFORMS

Study by Greg Sullivan, Andrew Mikula, & Rebekah Paxton

### PIONEER OPPORTUNITY

As the economy continues to face hurdles in reopening, our state governments and individual business leaders are providing both short- and long-term strategies to repair the economy. A full economic recovery from COVID-19 will require regulatory reform, rent relief, and infrastructure investment, as well as tax credits and deductions.

A **recent study** by Pioneer's Gregory Sullivan, Andrew Mikula, and Rebekah Paxton suggests that to properly aid businesses through reopening, a nationwide rent relief program that targets small businesses is essential as well as the creation of federal incentives for lenders to extend debt payment deadlines. Federal tax credits will also encourage consumers to support struggling businesses, specifically those that are brick-and-mortar.

“

EVERY ADDITIONAL DOLLAR ADDED TO THE STABILIZATION FUND DURING PROSPEROUS TIMES IS ANOTHER DOLLAR THAT CAN BE USED TO STIMULATE THE ECONOMY AND PREVENT FAMILIES FROM FALLING INTO POVERTY DURING TIMES OF CRISIS.”

- Andrew Mikula

The report offers several reforms for fiscal resilience, including the redirection of funds from federal grant programs to those more immediately related to the current economic crisis. Pioneer recommends creating regulatory reform and infrastructure investment opportunities that reduce local start-up and permitting costs for businesses, as well as national investments in sufficient broadband networks for small businesses and residences with a focus on identifying areas without high-speed internet access.

For more information on Sullivan, Mikula, and Paxton's recommendations, visit our [website](#).



## SHIFTING SPECIAL NEEDS STUDENTS TO ONLINE LEARNING IN THE COVID-19 SPRING

*Report by William Donovan & Julie Young*

### PIONEER EDUCATION

As digital learning continues to play a large role in K-12 and college education in the age of COVID-19, students with learning disabilities and special needs are faced with new challenges as school administrators try to redefine remote instruction from the ground up for all students, families, and teachers. A **recent report** released by Pioneer's William Donovan and Arizona State University's Julie Young explains how the teacher-parent relationship dynamic will continue to play a role in student learning, but this time with more manageable conditions, including open communication with students' IEPs.

Young and Donovan's recommendations include creative ideas for both teachers and families to engage Massachusetts students, such as home visits, localized neighborhood support, and partnerships with volunteers and community groups. The report also investigates the new lesson plans put forth by teachers this fall to address challenges that students may experience during the pandemic for online learning, such as organizational skills, problem solving, and time management.

For more information on Young and Donovan's report, visit our [website](#).

## ACCOUNTABILITY IN MASSACHUSETTS' REMOTE LEARNING REGULATIONS

*Policy Brief by John Flores & David Clancy*

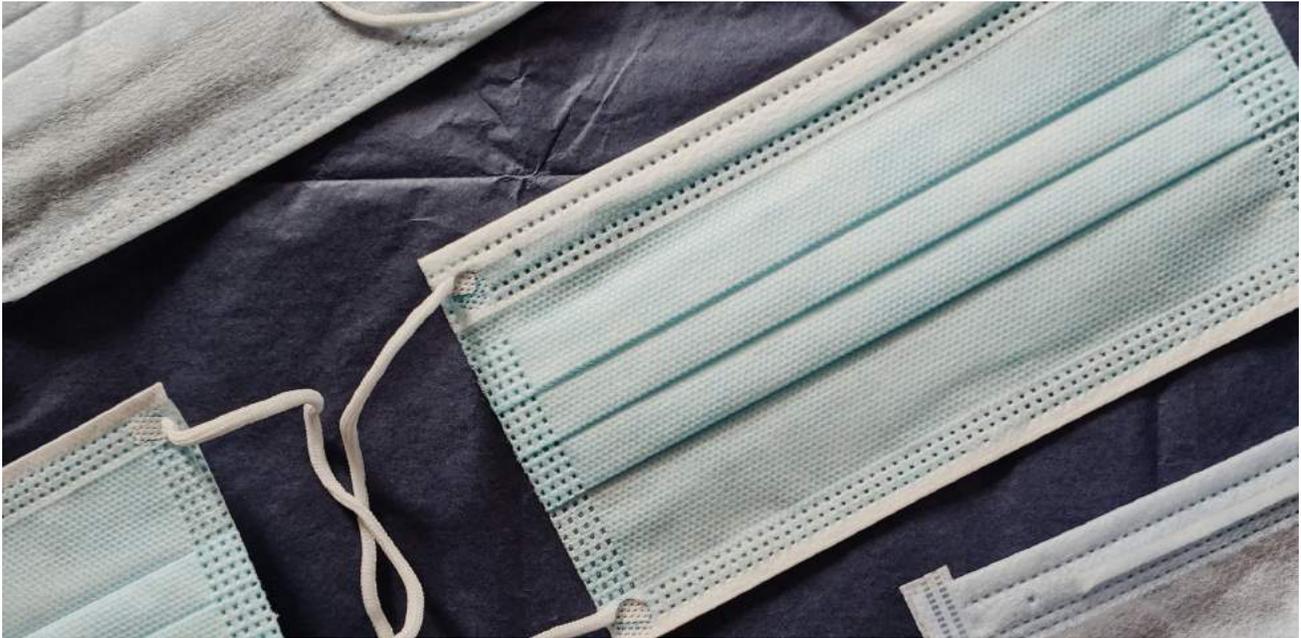
### PIONEER EDUCATION

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Massachusetts Teachers Association (MTA) has announced their support of legislation that will halt MCAS testing for the next four years. Following the recent MCAS cancellation last spring, Pioneer's report authors John Flores and David Clancy released a **policy brief** with recommendations to improve the state's recent pandemic-related revisions to remote learning. In the report, Flores and Clancy state that it is imperative for the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) to provide a clear and explicit message that core academics, grading, and MCAS expectations will be fully restored in the 2020-21 school year.

This report, which will be submitted to DESE, also requests necessary clarification to a number of their listed regulations, such as attendance policies for remote learning, assessment policies, and the approval of schools' plans by the DESE. Flores and Clancy suggest that school plans be reviewed and approved by the Commissioner of Education based on relevant law and published guidance. In doing so, the report authors believe this will facilitate a productive academic year through both remote and in-person opportunities for Massachusetts students.

For more information on Flores and Clancy's report, visit our [website](#).

# RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS



## COVID-19 TRANSPARENCY: A STEP BACKWARDS

*Op-Ed by David Clancy*

### PIONEERHEALTH

Since March of 2020, the Commonwealth's COVID-19 reporting has become more transparent and detailed – but recently Massachusetts has taken a step backwards.

The state has ended its longstanding daily reporting of the virus' cumulative impact on various age groups and opted for a less transparent, weekly release. This data is solely based on results from the last two weeks, not cumulative information from the beginning of the crisis, making it nearly impossible for members of the public to learn about the rate of cases without manually calculating the data themselves.

Furthermore, the new approach of using a shorter time period magnifies mistakes. In a COVID-19 [report](#) provided by the state on August 12th, only 14 deaths were noted as occurring in the two-week period when, in fact, more than 180 deaths were evident.

Although the report does administer cumulative data on dimensions other than age – including gender, race and ethnicity, county, and more – a [recent op-ed](#) by Pioneer's David Clancy argues this failure to do the same with age groups creates a picture that does not accurately depict the long-term trends of the crisis. A far greater mathematical and graphical impact is present on a report covering a two-week time period than a report covering a six-month or greater scale.

For more information on Clancy's analysis, visit our [website](#).

# RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

## ANALYSIS OF SPENDING ON SHOPPABLE SERVICES IN MASSACHUSETTS

Study by Barbara Anthony & Seher Chowdury

### PIONEERHEALTH

Healthcare prices widely vary across the state of Massachusetts, however provider price variation is generally not associated with quality. If a service is expensive that does not necessarily mean that it is of higher quality than a lower-cost service.

A **recent study** conducted by Pioneer's Barbara Anthony and Seher Chowdhury found that consumers in a single Massachusetts county could have saved almost \$22 million in one year if they switched to 16 shoppable healthcare services with prices closer to industry averages, rather than using the most expensive providers.

In order to make the switch, Anthony and Chowdury indicate that consumers must be made aware of more affordable options and that changing their behavior would be in their best interest. Since shoppable services generate significant healthcare savings for consumers, it's up to proactive insurers and providers, as well as state government leadership, to provide customers with easily accessible healthcare cost information such as this.

For more information on Anthony and Chowdury's study, visit our [website](#).

## MBTA TAKES ADVANTAGE OF RIDERSHIP LULL TO ACCELERATE \$8.5 BILLION MODERNIZATION PROGRAM

Press Release by Editorial Staff

### PIONEERTRANSPORTATION

Amid ridership declines resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, the MBTA announced that it will accelerate its ongoing construction projects this year. This puts the agency on track to fulfill the \$8.5 billion capital spending outlined in its FY2020-2024 Capital Plan.

In a **recent press release**, the Institute commends the Fiscal and Management Control Board and the MBTA management for recognizing this period of low transit use as an opportunity to revitalize a dated infrastructure. This follows the Institute's August 2019 **report**, *The MBTA's Capital Spending Crisis*, and October 2019 **report**, *The \$8.5 Billion Marshall Plan for MBTA Needs*, which criticized the chronic under-spending of available capital funds and called on the MBTA to hire outside expertise.

The T recently reported that June ridership levels were lower than February baseline levels prior to the pandemic by "70 percent on buses, 85 percent on subways, and 96 percent on commuter rail." In accordance with Pioneer's recommendations, the MBTA has hired outside experts to improve the project plan and accelerate construction schedules.

In the words of Pioneer's Jim Stergios, "The MBTA has made the most of a bad situation after suffering historic ridership declines triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic... the T deserves our congratulations. Our hope is that these investments will lead to a better customer experience once the pandemic has passed."

For more information on the modernization plan, visit our [website](#).

# STAYING INVOLVED WITH PIONEER IN THE AGE OF COVID-19

It's easy to stay connected with Pioneer Institute through our various media channels where we continue to provide timely information and resources on a remote basis. We hope you have tuned into **HubWonk**, our weekly podcast released each Tuesday that delves into current policy issues and innovative approaches to today's challenges, as well as **The Learning Curve**, our weekly podcast released each Wednesday where listeners can find straight talk about the nation's hottest education stories.

Through these projects, Pioneer aims to promote sound policy solutions from some of the industry's brightest minds in education, healthcare, economics, and transportation for decisionmakers, the media, and state residents alike. We invite you to read more on what we have discussed below!



## THE IMPORTANCE OF THE ELECTORAL COLLEGE

### THE LEARNING CURVE

In the wake of the recent presidential election, Cara Candal and Gerard Robinson are joined on "**The Learning Curve**" by nationally recognized author of *Why We Need the Electoral College*, Tara Ross. Ross explains the function of the Electoral College, why the Framers established it, and its historical role in elections. She explores how it encourages candidates to build coalitions across states and shares her thoughts on the current political climate.

You can listen to Ross's episode on *The Importance of the Electoral College* [here](#).

# STAYING INVOLVED WITH PIONEER IN THE AGE OF COVID-19

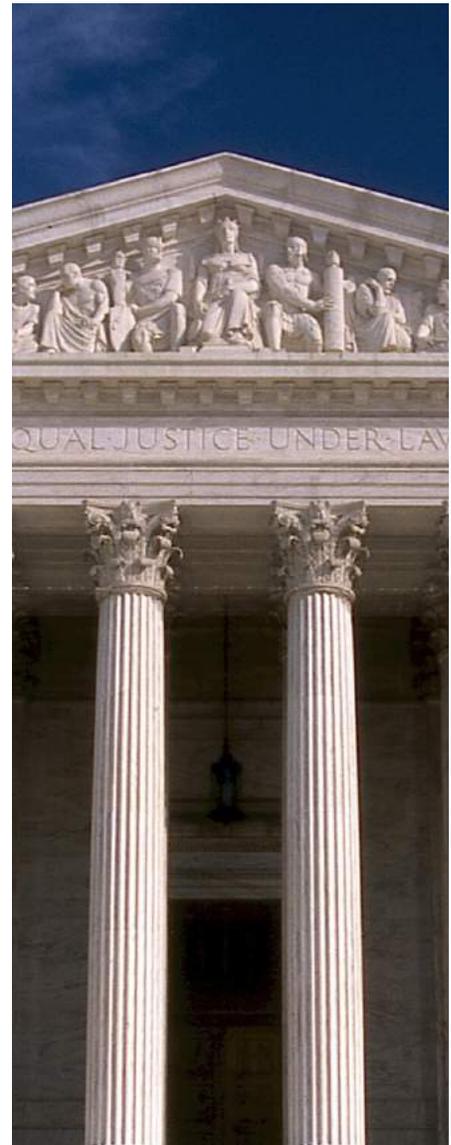
## SUPREME COURT VACANCY: THE HISTORY, THE STAKES & THE OPTIONS FOR REPLACING A JUSTICE

### HUBWONK

In a recent episode of "[HubWonk](#)," host Joe Selvaggi was joined by constitutional scholar and historian at Cato Institute, Ilya Shapiro, to talk about his new book, *Supreme Disorder: Judicial Nominations and the Politics of America's Highest Court*. The episode provides listeners with a historical context to better understand the makeup of the Court, the nomination process, and the impact of a new justice in the wake of Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg's recent passing.

The Senate has since confirmed Judge Amy Coney Barrett to fill the open seat. This decision wraps up a divisive Senate confirmation battle, a division that showed in the final 52-48 vote tally.

You can listen to Selvaggi and Shapiro's episode on *Supreme Court Vacancy: The History, the Stakes & the Options for Replacing a Justice* [here](#).



## THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

As Pioneer Young Professionals, we greatly appreciate your commitment, engagement, and support of civic discourse and nonpartisan, data-driven research and programming.

The Institute thanks you for your Membership and encourages you to renew at this time by [donating here](#) to help Pioneer better serve our community!

# PYP MEMBERSHIP OVERVIEW

The Pioneer Young Professionals, or PYP, is Pioneer's membership group designed to help young professionals become more engaged with Massachusetts and national public policy and learn more about the most pressing issues of the day.

The PYP program allows individuals under 40 to enjoy the benefits of a traditional \$1,000 annual Pioneer Membership at a steeply discounted rate of \$100 per year.

We offer the PYPs:

- Educational programming
- Access to exclusive events
- Special updates on our research
- Valuable networking opportunities with other members of Pioneer's growing community

Please consider **renewing** your PYP Membership or sharing this newsletter with a friend or colleague who may be interested in joining the PYPs!



**HAVE QUESTIONS ON YOUR MEMBERSHIP, SUGGESTIONS FOR NEW PYP PROGRAMMING, OR RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POTENTIAL MEMBERS? PLEASE REACH OUT TO YOUR PIONEER CONTACTS BELOW!**

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