

Massachusetts students should expect to take the MCAS in 2021

By Katie Lannan
State House News Service

Massachusetts students should expect to take their MCAS exams next spring, Elementary and Secondary Education Commissioner Jeff Riley said Tuesday.

In spring of this year, after schools were abruptly forced to transition to remote learning as COVID-19 cases mounted, state officials suspended the MCAS testing requirement for 2020. A federal decision allowing states to cancel tests if they filed waiver requests facilitated that move.

Addressing the state Board of Elementary and Secondary Education Tuesday, Riley said the federal government has signaled that similar action will not be coming in 2021.

“We have told superintendents very clearly that we do anticipate administering the MCAS this spring,” Riley said.

Groups including the Massachusetts Teachers Association and the American Federation of Teachers of Massachusetts backed bills that would impose a longer-term pause on the use of MCAS tests as a graduation requirement. Those bills were effectively killed when the Education Committee included them in study orders.

Board member Matt Hills of Newton predicted “a torrent of advocacy for cancelling or postponing MCAS for a wide range of reasons” as the spring testing period gets closer, but said he believes the test should be administered in 2021 and that state education officials should prepare contingency plans so

they are ready to give the test in various scenarios.

“It’s just inconceivable to me that we could consider this year to be anything other than a failed year, as a board, if we go to a second year without our common assessment tool, MCAS,” he said