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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:** March 28, 2023

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## **Gann Academy Wins Mass. Bar Association’s 2023 Mock Trial State Championship**

*Waltham school advances to nationals after prevailing over South Hadley’s Pioneer Valley Performing Arts Charter Public School in Finals*

BOSTON, Mass. — Gann Academy-the New Jewish High School in Waltham (“Gann Academy”) was today named State Champion of the Massachusetts Bar Association’s 2023 High School Mock Trial Program. Gann Academy prevailed against Pioneer Valley Performing Arts Charter Public School in South Hadley (PVPA) at the 37th Annual Statewide High School Mock Trial Competition Finals, which was held at the Great Hall in Faneuil Hall, Boston. The state title is Gann Academy’s first Mock Trial state championship.

Next up for Gann Academy is the National High School Mock Trial Championship, which will be held in Little Rock, Arkansas, from May 18-20. A portion of their trip will be funded by a \$2,500 donation from the Massachusetts Bar Association’s philanthropic partner, the Massachusetts Bar Foundation.

Started in 1985, the Massachusetts Bar Association’s Mock Trial Program began its 37th year in October 2022. More than 100 high schools from around Massachusetts competed in the 2023 program, which placed high school teams from across the state in simulated courtroom situations where they assumed the roles of lawyers, defendants and witnesses in hypothetical cases.

This year, the teams were presented with a fictional civil case (Bari/Barry Jacob v. Caborite Aircraft, Inc.), which revolved around whether or not the wing of a stunt plane (the Caborite Model 2) sheared off due to a design defect or as a result of pilot error. The plaintiff, Barry/Bari Jacob, was the child of John Dymek Jacob, a stunt pilot who died performing an advanced aerobatic maneuver called the Triple Lindy while practicing for a stunt show at the Devlin County Fair. The plaintiff asserts that the defendant, Caborite Aircraft, Inc., failed to design the plane to withstand the amount of g-force necessary for a stunt plane in order to save money. Caborite’s position is that the plane was designed correctly and that the plane’s maximum permitted g-force was exceeded because of pilot error. The question for trial: Can the plaintiff prove by a preponderance of the evidence that the design was defective, or will the defendant be successful in its defense that this tragedy was the result of pilot error? PVPA played the role of the plaintiff in the finals, and Gann Academy played the role of the defense.

The state championship was judged by a three-member panel (a presiding judge, and two scoring judges), similar to the process used at the national mock trial competition. This year’s judging panel included Hon. Jennifer L. Ginsburg, from the Massachusetts District Court, as scoring judge; Hon. Peter M. Lauriat (Ret.),

from the Massachusetts Superior Court, as scoring judge; and Hon. Mark D Mason, from the Massachusetts Superior Court, as the presiding judge.

Before the championship round commenced, Massachusetts Bar Association Secretary Samuel A. Segal welcomed the teams and said each team should be proud to have made it to the finals. “No matter the outcome today, each of our talented finalists has managed to rise above the other 106 other high schools across the state,” Segal said. “That is an amazing accomplishment on its own. Congratulations, again, to both teams!”

The Mock Trial Program is administered by the Massachusetts Bar Association. Just over 100 lawyers and judges across the state also volunteered as coaches and judges this year.

*Incorporated in 1911, the Massachusetts Bar Association is a non-profit organization that serves the legal profession and the public by promoting the administration of justice, legal education, professional excellence and respect for the law. The MBA represents a diverse group of attorneys, judges and legal professionals across the commonwealth.*