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## **Pioneer Valley Performing Arts Charter Public School Wins Mass. Bar Association's 2024 Mock Trial State Championship**

*In rematch of last year's Final, South Hadley school advances to nationals after prevailing over  
Waltham's Gann Academy-the New Jewish High School*

BOSTON, Mass. — Pioneer Valley Performing Arts Charter Public School in South Hadley (PVPA) was today named State Champion of the Massachusetts Bar Association's 2024 High School Mock Trial Program. In a rematch of last year's state final, PVPA prevailed against 2023 champion Gann Academy-the New Jewish High School in Waltham (Gann Academy) at the 38th Annual Statewide High School Mock Trial Competition Final, which was held in Rabb Hall at the Boston Public Library. The state title is PVPA's fourth Mock Trial state championship.

Next up for PVPA is the National High School Mock Trial Championship, which will be held in Wilmington, Delaware, from May 3-4. 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 38th year in October 2023. One-hundred eleven (111) high schools from around Massachusetts competed in the 2024 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 criminal case, *Commonwealth of Massachusetts v. Maiyer Wahl*. On Dec. 3, 2022, the defendant, Maiyer Wahl, alleges that they went to the house of Sal Badgerow for the purpose of repaying a debt they owed to Badgerow. The defendant alleges that when they arrived, they were robbed, beaten and stabbed at Badgerow's house, and then kidnapped and dumped by the side of the road in Dober, Massachusetts. The prosecution alleges that the defendant broke into Badgerow's house at night with the intent to steal money (to wit, approximately \$15,000) and that Wahl fabricated the kidnapping to implicate Badgerow criminally and avoid the obligation to repay the debt owed to Badgerow. The defendant has been charged with burglary, larceny and filing a false police report. PVPA played the role of the prosecutor 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. Kenneth Desmond Jr., from the Massachusetts Appeals Court, as scoring judge; Hon. Margaret Guzman, from

the U.S. District Court, District of Massachusetts, as scoring judge; and Hon. Mark D Mason (Ret.), from the Massachusetts Superior Court, as the presiding judge.

The Mock Trial Program is administered by the Massachusetts Bar Association. One-hundred seventeen (117) 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.*