



Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education

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MEMORANDUM

To: Members of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education
From: Farzana Mohamed, Board Budget Committee Chair
Date: November 18, 2024
Subject: FY26 Elementary and Secondary Education Budget Priorities

The Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (Board) Budget Committee met in October and November to discuss the priority areas of focus for the Board's FY26 state budget priorities for presentation to the full Board.

As always, the committee recommends that the Board support the maximum funding available to support the state education accounts (Chapter 70, Special Education Circuit Breaker, Charter School Tuition Reimbursement and other district transportation reimbursement accounts).

The preponderance of the state budget is programmed through specific formulaic aid distributions; the biggest share of those funds is automatically allocated to fund Chapter 70, circuit breaker reimbursements, district transportation reimbursement accounts, and rural aid. The committee's discussions recognized the current state of K-12 public education funding, noting the Commonwealth's commitment to the funding schedule called for in the 2019 Student Opportunity Act.

The committee supports the department's overall budget priorities, consistent with the performance goals set forth by the Board. Within that overall framework, the committee highlighted the following programmatic areas for further discussion.

Funding for Early Literacy Programming: The legislature allocated \$20 million of the initially requested \$30 million for statewide early literacy programming. Committee members advocated for a restoration of the full amount of funding, noting that the requested amount was carefully derived from an analysis of program requirements and impacts. A shortfall in funding over the life of the project could compromise the project's intended achievement and outcomes.

Funding for Workforce Diversification and Readiness: The committee recommends expansion funds in response to high demand for the Teacher Diversification Grant and for new research around recruitment and retention of teachers. Committee members highlighted the critically

important function of the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) in certification and oversight of educator preparation programs.

Support for high dosage tutoring: The committee discussion noted that the substantial tranches of federal funding support related to pandemic recovery have tapered off, resulting in some cancellation of attendant programs such as after-school programming and tutoring initiatives. The committee supports bolstering funding for such programming where required, whether channeled through early literacy programming or other avenues.

Committee members further discussed and expressed support for the following areas:

- Continued investment in developing and disbursing high quality instructional materials for use across the Commonwealth's school districts.
- Aid for small rural districts
- Expanding Career Technical Education (Chapter 74) opportunities to build capacity to serve all students seeking to access these offerings.
- Gifted and talented programming – developing processes and capacities for serving the needs of advanced students. Members noted that there is an opportunity to examine how competency based education and evaluation might fit into a broader discussion of assessment and evaluation.

Budget Committee members highlighted the importance to students of financial literacy programs, as well as initiatives to further college and career readiness. This year's budget does not include earmarked funding for this area.

The Budget Committee looks forward to discussing its recommendations with the Board at the November 19 meeting. We recommend that the Board authorize the Commissioner to work with the Secretary, Governor, and Legislature to finalize an FY26 state budget for elementary and secondary education that supports our collective priorities for the 2025-2026 school year.