*****Massachusetts Board of***

***Elementary and Secondary Education***

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| Katherine Craven  *Chair* |  |

# MEMORANDUM

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| To: | Members of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education |
| From: | Katherine Craven, Chair |
| Date: | April 15, 2025 |
| Subject: | Special Meeting April 17, 2025, Interview Finalists for Commissioner |

This memorandum provides information to the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (Board) regarding the process for the Special Meeting on Thursday, April 17, 2025 at Mass Bay Community College, Wellesley, where the Board will interview finalists for the position of Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education.

**Background**

In March 2024, Commissioner Jeff Riley stepped down from the position of Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education. The Board then began the process of selecting a new Commissioner as described in G.L. c. 15, § 1F. The Board hired the search firm of Issacson, Miller to assist in the search process. The search process began with collecting public feedback on the position description through both an online survey and through a series of in-person and online public listening sessions. The Board subsequently convened a preliminary screening committee including myself, Member Education Secretary Dr. Patrick Tutwiler, Member Dr. Ericka Fisher, and Member Dr. Martin West, as well as more than 20 non-voting members comprised of a broad set of internal and external stakeholders to inform and support the search process.

In November 2024, the Commissioner position description was posted, and the Board, with the assistance of Isaacson, Miller conducted a nationwide search for the next Commissioner. The preliminary screening committee met multiple times to review applicants, select applicants for interviews, interview semifinalists, and then to recommend finalists to be interviewed by the Board. Ultimately, the voting members of the preliminary screening committee selected three finalists to be interviewed by the full Board.

**Process for the Special Meeting**

The Board will meet on Thursday, April 17, from 2:00 pm to 8:00 pm at Mass Bay Community College in Wellesley to interview the finalists. The meeting will be open to the public and livestreamed.

Ahead of the meeting, each Board member will receive the finalists’ resumes and cover letters. Board members will also have the opportunity to submit suggested interview questions to Isaacson, Miller.

At the beginning of the meeting, the Board will discuss the interview questions submitted and reviewed by Board members in advance. Based on that discussion, I will assign each Board member a question to ask each finalist. The interviews will be conducted one at a time in alphabetical order. Each interview will be 90 minutes, with 15-minute breaks in between. During each interview, the finalists will introduce themselves to the Board and spend 10-15 minutes responding to the following question prompt that they will have received in advance:

*Given the current context in Massachusetts—the lingering effects of the pandemic on student learning and mental health, limited recent progress in raising student achievement and closing racial and socioeconomic gaps, and the need to develop a new approach to ensuring common graduation standards for all Massachusetts students—how would you plan to enter into the Commissioner role? Talk about your strategies for getting up to speed, building strong relationships with educators and partners across the Commonwealth, and addressing the current moment.*

After responding to the prompt, each finalist will be asked an identical series of questions. Each Board member will ask their assigned question.

Finalists will wait in a “green room” while waiting for their interview and will not be able to watch the previous finalists interviews.

After the interviews have been completed, the public will be encouraged to submit feedback via an online survey available on the Commissioner Search and the DESE website. I will ask that surveys be completed by Monday, April 21, at 5:00 pm so that Board members can review the survey feedback before reconvening.

The Board will meet again on Tuesday, April 22 from 2:00 pm to 4:00pm at DESE in Everett to select one of the finalists to recommend to the Secretary as the next Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education. As per G.L. c. 15, § 1F, the Board must vote, by a two-thirds majority, to recommend one of the finalists to the Secretary to appoint as Commissioner.

If Board members have questions about the finalist interview process, they can reach out to members of the Isaacson, Miller Team and Abby Fee, General Counsel, EOE.