



## CITY OF SALEM, MASSACHUSETTS

Kimberley Driscoll  
Mayor

**TO:** The Joint Committee on Education

**DATE:** July 2, 2019

**RE:** *An Act Ensuring High Quality Pre-kindergarten Education* H.551 - Lead Sponsor Chairwoman Alice Peisch and S.265 - Lead Sponsor Senator Sal DiDomenico

Salem early education providers ask for your support of *An Act Ensuring High Quality Pre-kindergarten Education*. This bill builds on the Commonwealth's strong policy foundation for high-quality early education. This bill further provides a targeted, phased-in plan for providing state funded pre-kindergarten to preschool aged children (2.9 – 5 years-old), through a mixed delivery system with prioritization based on community readiness and serving high-needs students.

Salem did not receive a Commonwealth Preschool Partnership Initiative (CPPI) grant from the Department of Early Education and Care this year and while that was disappointing, we are continuing to lay the groundwork for increased access to preschool. We know that the need is real in our community and across the Commonwealth.

Expanding high-quality early education needs to be a priority. Research has found that children who attended high-quality early education programs have stronger literacy, numeracy, and social skills. By providing more children in Massachusetts with the opportunity to succeed in school and in life, we also help ensure the Commonwealth's future prosperity

Please support *An Act Ensuring High Quality Pre-kindergarten Education*, so that more children in Massachusetts will be prepared to enter school ready to learn.

  
Kimberly Driscoll, Mayor of Salem

  
Emily Ullman, Director of Community Engagement and Partnerships

  
Charity Lezama, Executive Director Salem YMCA



**Dr. Stephen Zrike, Superintendent/Receiver**

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Tuesday, July 2, 2019

Dear Members of the Joint Committee on Education,

On behalf of the Holyoke community, we urge you to support **H.551 and S.265** to promote and ensure high-quality pre-kindergarten education. We aim to be the first in Massachusetts to offer free, full-day pre-kindergarten for all 4-year-old children in Holyoke.

Research states the importance of preschool to help students:

- Develop social emotional and academic readiness for Kindergarten (Center for Public Education - Learning to Read: Reading to Learn, Michigan State University - Kindergarten Readiness)
- Be proficient readers by the end of 3<sup>rd</sup> grade (a critical year, when students move from learning to read to reading to learn) (Center for Public Education - Learning to Read: Reading to Learn)

Additionally, Boston Public Schools research shows that students attending BPS PK outperformed peers in Math in grade 5 and in ELA in grade 3.

We see this impact in our HPS preschool classrooms. **Our preschool students are nearly two times more likely to be prepared for Kindergarten**, as measured on the nationally normed STAR assessment. And, although our students in preschool are more prepared, many students are still not prepared for kindergarten. Our students who are in full-day preschool programs also have stronger attendance than those who attend half-day programs (93% vs. 88%).

Families understand this impact. Our families continue to request full-day preschool and are highly satisfied with the HPS programs. Given all this evidence, the expansion of full-day preschool is a key lever in the Holyoke Public Schools Turnaround plan.

We have attempted to meet the overwhelming demand for high-quality, full-day, free preschool by offering programs operated by the Holyoke Public Schools and in partnership with Valley Opportunity Council, a well-known, high-quality provider of early educational programming. **We have nearly doubled our enrollment since the start of the HPS receivership. However, our ability to maintain this enrollment is in great jeopardy, given that the federally-funded preschool expansion grant funding is about to conclude.** And, our ability to expand programming to reach all Holyoke 4-year-old children is far from being attainable at this point.

Thank you for considering these bills to support early childhood education by providing crucial funding. Our youngest learners, their families, and our city depends on your leadership.

Sincerely,

Dr. Stephen Zrike, Jr.  
Superintendent/Receiver  
Holyoke Public Schools

Stephen Huntley  
Executive Director  
Valley Opportunity Council

**Berkshire United Way**  
200 South Street  
Pittsfield, MA 01201  
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berkshireunitedway.org



June 12, 2019

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**President and CEO**  
Kristine Hazzard

Dear Legislators and Supporters for Early Childhood,

Berkshire United Way, and coalition members of Pittsfield Promise are committed to ensuring K-readiness and third grade reading proficiency. To do that we must continue to advocate for high-quality affordable child care for all children but particularly our most vulnerable low-income families. Failure to do so is a missed opportunity to improve the lives in our community and state. We know high quality programs pay for themselves in the long and short term.

In our community we have watched the achievement gap grow between local schools and neighborhoods. Our goal continues to work to bridge that gap and allow for all children to flourish.

We ask your support for the following early education and care line items in the Conference Committee budget as follows:

**An Act Ensuring High Quality Pre-Kindergarten Education - [H.551](#) - Lead Sponsor Chairwoman Alice Peisch and [S.265](#) – Lead Sponsor Senator Sal DiDomenico.**

An Act Ensuring High Quality Pre-Kindergarten Education would expand preschool beginning with high-needs communities that are ready with a state-approved expansion plan.

Currently, 19 communities have preschool plans: Athol, Boston, Brockton, Cape Cod (a four-town regional plan covering Dennis, Yarmouth, Chatham and Harwich), Fall River, Haverhill, Holyoke, Lawrence, Lee, Lowell, Lynn, New Bedford, North Adams, Northampton, Pittsfield, Salem, Somerville, Springfield, and Worcester.

This list includes five cities implementing federal Preschool Expansion Grant funds to serve 850 four-year-olds annually (2015-2019), and six communities implementing the Commonwealth Preschool Partnership Initiative (state budget line item 3000-6025) beginning in 2019.

**Please continue to support our early educators' salaries with the Rate Reserve for Early Educators (3000-1042) and Workforce Development Initiative (3000-7066).**

Thank you,

Members of Pittsfield Promise Coalition



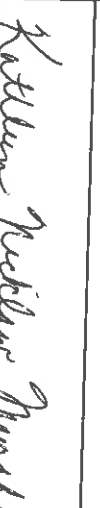

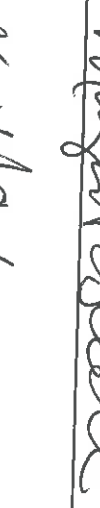


**An Act Ensuring High Quality Pre-Kindergarten Education - H.551 - Lead Sponsor Chairwoman Alice Peisch and S.265 - Lead Sponsor Senator Sal DiDomenico.**

**Please continue to support our early educators' salaries with the Rate Reserve for Early Educators (3000-1042) and Workforce Development Initiative (3000-7066).**

Name	Signature	Agency	Date
Lori Kays	Lori Kays	DEF	6/14/19
Sue Doucette	Sue Doucette	MELT	6/14/19
Sharon Connors	Sharon Connors	Kidzone	6/14/19

An Act Ensuring High Quality Pre-Kindergarten Education - H.551 - Lead Sponsor Chairwoman Alice Peisch and S.265 - Lead Sponsor Senator Sal DiDomenico.

Please continue to support our early educators' salaries with the Rate Reserve for Early Educators (3000-1042) and Workforce Development Initiative (3000-7066).

Name	Signature	Agency	Date
Kelly Marion		Gladys Allen Brigham Community Centers Inc.	6/14/19
Chris Nolan		WA C. 412M	6/14/19
KATE MURPHY		Natick early childhood	6/14/19
Margaret Steele		Berkskin Community Head Start	6.14.19
Krystal Castagna		Elizabeth Freeman Center	6/14/19
Cynthia Schwartz		Pittsfield Public Schools	6/14/19
Dorcas McCallity		BUW BOARD	6/14/19

**TO:** The Joint Committee on Education

**DATE:** July 2, 2019

**RE:** *An Act Ensuring High Quality Pre-kindergarten Education* [H.551](#) - Lead Sponsor Chairwoman Alice Peisch and [S.265](#) – Lead Sponsor Senator Sal DiDomenico

New Bedford early education providers ask for your support of *An Act Ensuring High Quality Pre-kindergarten Education*. This bill builds on the Commonwealth's strong policy foundation for high-quality early education. This bill further provides a targeted, phased-in plan for providing state funded pre-kindergarten to preschool aged children (2.9 – 5 years-old), through a mixed delivery system with prioritization based on community readiness and serving high-needs students. It will also build on the federally funded Preschool Expansion Grants.

In spring 2019, New Bedford applied and received a Commonwealth Preschool Partnership Initiative (CPPI) grant from the Department of Early Education and Care. The grant brings together the New Bedford Public Schools, PACE Head Start, Little People's College, NorthStar Learning Centers, and YMCA Southcoast. Together these 5 agencies represent thousands of children ages 2.9-5 years old in New Bedford.

With these funds we have expanded preschool classrooms to include shared comprehensive services for the children and families including; special education, behavior management, case management and speech and language services. The model we have designed provides a mixed delivery system of early education and care with a mixed fee structure. All programs meet equivalent standards for high quality programming, equitable teacher salaries, low staff: child ratios, professional development, child assessment, and program.

These activities and programs should be happening for children across the Commonwealth. Unfortunately, we were only one of six communities to be awarded a small pilot grant. Thirteen additional communities with a documented history of successful preschool partnerships have recently lost federal funding. It is the obligation of the Commonwealth to recognize the success of these programs and prioritize funding and support for early education and care. Seeing

how this grant is improving our own community, we implore the legislature to expand these opportunities throughout Massachusetts.

Expanding high-quality early education needs to be a priority. Research has found that children who attended high-quality early education programs have stronger literacy, numeracy, and social skills. By providing more children in Massachusetts with the opportunity to succeed in school and in life, we also help ensure the Commonwealth's future prosperity

Please support ***An Act Ensuring High Quality Pre-kindergarten Education***, so that all children in Massachusetts will be prepared to enter school ready to learn.

Sandra Rego  
CEO  
Little People's College

Sonia Walmsley  
Executive Director of  
Educational Access & Pathways  
New Bedford Public Schools

Maria Rosario  
Executive Director  
North Star Learning Centers

Pam Keuchler  
Executive Director  
P.A.C.E

Tara Pacheco  
Executive Director  
New Bedford YMCA

Jill Fox  
Director  
P.A.C.E Head Start

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We are submitting this letter on behalf of many in the community of Haverhill. Here in Haverhill, parents are eager for more preschool opportunities. Based on a survey we conducted in 2018, there were 191 children on waitlists and unable to enroll in a preschool program. In order to meet this demand, in Haverhill we pulled together a group of committed early childhood education champions and began a strong collaboration between early childhood community-based providers and Haverhill Public School leaders. We applied for and received a preschool expansion planning grant from the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care. Together, we created a strong and thoughtful implementation plan to expand preschool opportunities in Haverhill.

We were one of 6 communities who applied for but did not receive implementation funds for our plan in FY19.

An Act Ensuring High Quality Pre-Kindergarten Education would expand preschool beginning with high-needs communities, like Haverhill, that are ready with a state-approved expansion plan. Currently, 19 communities have preschool plans: Athol, Boston, Brockton, Cape Cod (a four-town regional plan covering Dennis, Yarmouth, Chatham and Harwich), Fall River, Haverhill, Holyoke, Lawrence, Lee, Lowell, Lynn, New Bedford, North Adams, Northampton, Pittsfield, Salem, Somerville, Springfield, and Worcester. This list includes five cities implementing federal Preschool Expansion Grant funds to serve 850 four-year-olds annually (2015-2019), and six communities implementing the Commonwealth Preschool Partnership Initiative (state budget line item 3000-6025) beginning in 2019. Until now, state investment in preschool has been modest, and not kept pace with local demand.

An estimated 10,000 additional 3- and 4-year-olds from these communities could enroll in high-quality preschool under this legislation. These are children who would otherwise not enroll in any formal program before kindergarten. A fully-funded state plan for preschool expansion would grow over time to include more communities and serve more young children and their families.

The Act is essentially a comprehensive plan for preschool expansion in Massachusetts, modeled after the New Jersey Abbott preschool program, which has helped to narrow the achievement gap in its communities.

Key components include:

- A focus on preschool-age children (from 2 years and 9 months to kindergarten eligible);
- A commitment to the mixed-delivery system of public and private Pre-K providers such as currently exists in Haverhill;
- A multi-year phase-in of funding, beginning with “ready communities” like Haverhill that have state-approved implementation plans.
- Priority for communities, like Haverhill with large percentages of high-needs students;



- Adequate funding to ensure program quality and teacher salaries and qualifications comparable to the K-12 system;
- Program quality requirements aligned with federal Preschool Expansion Grant standards, including student- to-teacher ratios of 10 to 1, with no more than 20 Pre-K students, teacher qualifications and compensation, inclusion of children with disabilities, developmentally appropriate instruction, and family engagement.

We urge you to support the bill (H.551, S.265) fully and to see it through to passage, enactment and complete implementation by the Baker Administration.

Janet Begin  
Teacher Leader, Marigold Montessori &  
Partner, Wildflower Foundation

John Cuneo  
President/CEO  
Community Action, Inc.

Tracy Fuller  
Regional Executive Director  
Haverhill YMCA

Margaret Marotta  
Superintendent  
Haverhill Public Schools