

Joint Committee on Education Hearing
In support of “An Act Relative to Grants for High Quality Early Education”
“An Act Ensuring High-Quality Pre-Kindergarten Education”
(H.551 / S.265)
Tuesday, July 2, 2019

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Good morning Chairwoman Peisch, Chairman Lewis, and members of the Committee.

Thank you for this opportunity. It is an honor to sit with these early educators who were able to work with the staff in their programs to be with us here today at the State House.

I am here in support of [An Act relative to grants for high quality early education - H.551](#), and [An Act ensuring high-quality pre-kindergarten education - S.265](#).

While the bills have different names, both build on the Commonwealth’s strong policy foundation for high-quality early education and provide a targeted, phased-in plan for providing state funded pre-kindergarten to children 2.9 – 5 years-old, through a mixed delivery system with prioritization based on community readiness and serving high-needs students. It builds on the lessons learned we have learned through the federally funded Preschool Expansion Grants which end in August 2019.

Right now, there are 19 communities who have received a Preschool Expansion Grant, Commonwealth Preschool Partnership Initiative grant or a Preschool Planning Grant which includes **29% of the preschool-age population in Massachusetts** - 14% live in Boston, Worcester and Springfield.

We have put together this chart that shows the momentum and progression of preschool expansion across the state over the last 4 years.

In 2015, Massachusetts was awarded the **Federal Preschool Expansion Grant** - \$15 million a year for 4 years for five communities to serve 850 four year olds in Boston, Holyoke, Lowell, Lawrence, and Springfield. The funds flow through the public school districts to classrooms in community based centers with educators paid comparable to the local public school salaries. You will hear more about the impact to early educators on this panel. This grant created an opportunity for a stronger public / private collaboration than we have seen in the past.

Starting in 2016, the state invested in **Preschool Planning Grants** that have supported communities local efforts to work together, determine the local landscape and capacity to

serve preschool age children and to consider how to ensure program quality, recruiting early educators, providing comprehensive services and meaningfully engaging families.

Then, the legislature created the **Commonwealth Preschool Partnership Initiative and included** \$5 million in FY19 state budget. Twelve communities applied for state funds in January 2019 and six grants were awarded. The funding supported expansion in preschool programs from February 1 through June 30, 2019.

Passing these bills is an important step in creating a fully-funded state plan for preschool expansion that would grow over time to include more communities and serve more young children and families and provide increased compensation for early educators.

Today you will hear from representatives from communities across the state who are ready to go – they have done the critical work to develop plans, to build and strengthen relationships in the public and private sector -- all in the name of best serving the children and families in their communities.

Now, it is my absolute honor to introduce Clifford Kwong as the next speaker on our panel.

As many of you know, I started as a preschool teacher over 20 years ago at Ellis Memorial in the South End of Boston. Last year I was at an event at the Boston Public Library and a young man walked up to me and said, “My name is Clifford Kwong, and you were my preschool teacher.”

Yes, Clifford was a preschool student in the very first class I taught at Ellis. And NOW, Clifford is a PreK teacher AT ELLIS. It has been amazing to get to know Cliff as an adult and talented teacher and to learn more about his teaching philosophy and why he believes in the power of early education.

Thank you.