



Multistate Association for Bilingual Education – Northeast, Inc

An educational nonprofit promoting multilingualism, equity and social justice in communities

The Honorable Ronald Mariano
Speaker of the House
State House, Room 473G
Boston, Massachusetts 02133

The Honorable Karen Spilka
Senate President
State House, Room 511-B
Boston, Massachusetts 02133

June 27, 2022

Dear Honorable Legislators,

I am writing today on behalf of the Multistate Association for Bilingual Education-Northeast (MABE) in support of H.4539/S.2748: An Act Relative to Educator Diversity, also known as the Educator Diversity Act. MABE's mission is to identify, promote, disseminate and support districts with implementing and sustaining research-based programs and practices that support bilingualism and multiculturalism for educational success.

MABE has been providing technical support to districts implementing the LOOK Act and the Student Opportunity Act. The goal of expanding more equitable opportunities for our English Learners is not happening as was intended with the LOOK Act simply because Dual Language Education (DLE) programs are not being implemented. MABE conducted a survey and interviewed leaders in districts to learn about the barriers they face and perceived obstacles for considering DLE programs. A recurring concern we heard from district leaders was difficulty in recruiting and hiring qualified bilingual staff. *An Act Relative to Educator Diversity* presents an opportunity for breaking down the "STAFFING" barrier to implementing new DLE programs.

While the bill is intended to offer alternative solutions and support to increase teacher diversity, the language is vague and merely lays out mandates rather than removing barriers and providing support for districts to increase educator diversity. Additionally, one consequence of Question 2, when Sheltered English Immersion programs were mandated in 2002, has been that the Commonwealth has a small pool of diverse staff available today (those who are proficient in languages other than English and are trained in dual language education). The mandates to districts as the bill is currently written, may have unintended punitive consequences as districts compete for this limited pool of qualified staff. Moreover, DESE does not have staff or expertise to support districts with implementation of the current version of this

bill, especially the creation and implementation of the proposed Center for Strategic Initiatives. In fact, there are very few staff who have an understanding of bilingual and dual language education programming, programs that require diverse staff.

Therefore, we express our full support for the provisions outlined below as key strategies for accelerating DESE and district efforts to reach the collective goal of 25% Educator Diversity which would require the hiring of 16,000 educators of color by 2030. Achieving this ambitious goal will require critical new investment and key changes to policy which we believe are in part accomplished by the following policy proposal.

The Educator Diversity Act would accomplish the following:

- Alternative Certification: Establish a pathway for alternative certification to the MTEL by 2024 and provide safeguards for negative impacts of certification on candidates of color, such as diversifying the Career Vocational Technical Education educator pipeline and creating similar alternative pathways for licensure
- Data Diversity Dashboard: Charging DESE to establish an Educator Diversity Data Dashboard which would disaggregate data in areas such as educator retention by race and set clear targets for the diversification of the educator pipeline
- Hiring & Promotional Practices, Biases, & Mandated Diversity & Inclusion Training: Require uniformity across school districts to appoint diversity officers or teams to set the vision for DEI plans, set measurable goals, and to ensure compliance with all provisions
- Require mandatory diversity and anti-bias training for the school committee, district leaders, screening committees, and all staff
- Establish directive to DESE to create regulations, guidance, and policies aimed at prioritizing districts in which the disproportionately between students and educators of color is greatest.
- Elevate the Voices of Diverse Educators: Establish Educator Diversity Councils to serve as advisory councils to school committees and district leaders to address issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion in local school districts.

- Create an Educator Diversity Grant Fund specifically targeted at programs and practices aimed at increasing educator diversity and retention. This funding is subject to annual appropriation from the legislature and requires evaluation and to ensure compliance with all provisions

We want to share with you the story of one of our leaders in Dual Language Education:

“While data shows that students experience better outcomes when they are surrounded by educators who reflect their culture and experiences, diverse educators face disproportionate barriers in entering the profession—such as hiring bias and challenges passing the MTEL. Our Dual Language programs rely on our Spanish teachers. Our Spanish teachers teach the Spanish component of the program and are expected to only speak in that language just as we have English teachers that only teach the English component of instruction. We could not have Dual Language Programs without Spanish teachers. In order to show that we value and respect their professional expertise, we should validate and accept their teaching licenses from Puerto Rico and have easier avenues for teachers from other countries to obtain licensure. It is not a requirement for our Spanish teachers to be completely fluent in English in order to get a job as a Dual Language Teacher, just in the same way we do not require our English teachers to be fully fluent in Spanish to get a job with us either. They should have the opportunity to take the MTELEs in their native language and the language they are being expected to teach in. Furthermore, 19% of educators of color leave the classroom annually at the national level. Lack of diversity planning and cultural competency act as contributing factors to these retention rates. Therefore, the Educator Diversity Act would address barriers across the entire educator pipeline, from recruitment to retention, while also creating uniformity across the Commonwealth.”

Each of you have shown a remarkable commitment to ensuring all students see themselves represented in the classroom. Your consideration of this bill will allow us to fundamentally transform the diversity of our educator pipeline that serves our students. We urge you to bring up H.682/S.366: An Act Relative to Educator Diversity to a floor vote and thank you for your time and consideration!

Respectfully,

Phyllis Hardy, MABE Executive Director