



Multistate Association for Bilingual Education – Northeast, Inc
An educational nonprofit promoting multilingualism, equity and social justice in communities

October 21, 2021

Senator Jason Lewis, Senate Chair
Representative Alice Hanlon Peisch, House Chair
Joint Committee on Education
MA State House
Room 511-B
Boston, MA 02133

Dear Representative Peisch, Senator Lewis and Members of the Joint Committee on Education,

On behalf of the Multistate Association for Bilingual Education, (MABE) Working Group on School Accountability, we would like to express support for bills H 682 and S 366: *An Act Relative to Educator Diversity*. We urge you to report these bills favorably out of Committee for the following reasons:

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.

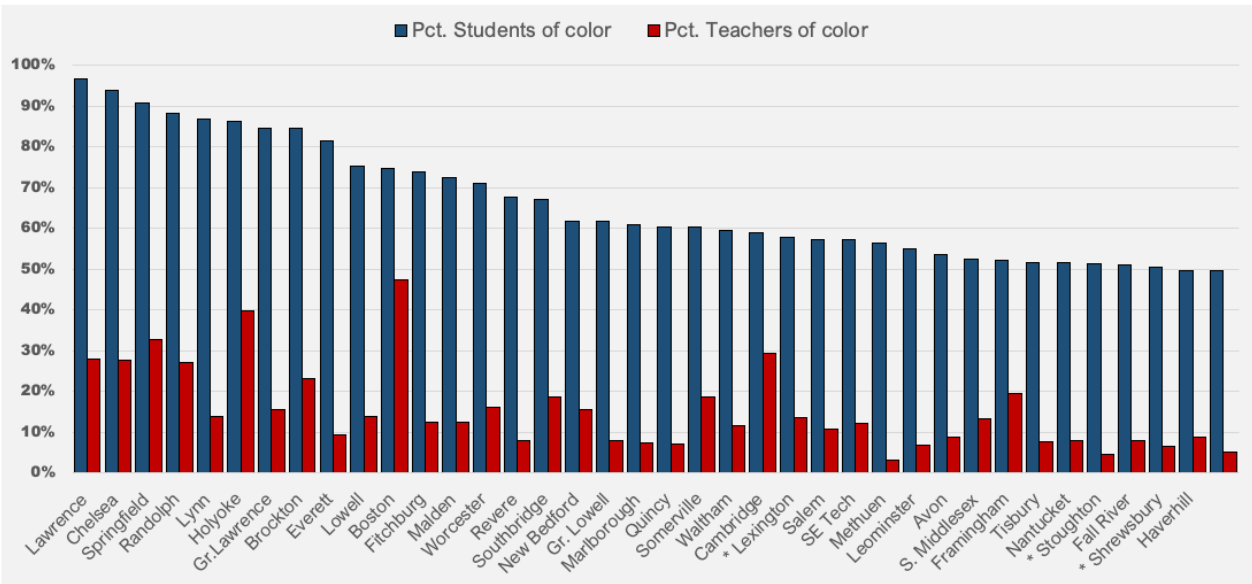
While the bill is intended to offer alternative solutions and support to increase teacher diversity, the language is vague and merely lays out mandates rather than removing barriers and providing support for districts to increase educator diversity. Additionally, one consequence of Question 2, when Sheltered 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.

MABE recommends the following revisions to strengthen the language of the bill:

- **The bill should be targeted and have an intentional focus on districts where an increase in diversity of teachers will benefit the student body.** This means focus on districts with the highest % of student diversity (% of ELs and non-white students). In fact, an analysis of student enrollment information from the DESE shows that 34 districts plus 4 vocational high schools (not including charter schools) in the state have student populations of 50% or greater minority students. The Gaston Institute has created [student diversity maps](#) that clearly shows the districts with the largest percentages of ELs in the state as well as the districts with the largest % of student diversity in the state. Even in districts making progress in hiring a staff that reflects the diversity of their student population, challenges remain. For example, in Boston, 74.7% of students are non-white and 47.5% of teachers are non-white. In contrast in Lawrence, 96.7% of students are non-white and only 28% of the teaching staff is non-white.

Gap between teachers of color and students of color in MA School Districts.

The graph displays the gap between the percentage of students of color and the percentage of teachers of color in a given district. The data include only school districts with majority students of color. Source: DESE. Analysis: MABE



- **Include specific provisions of financial support to the districts according to the needs of student population** or % of student diversity and not by size of district
 - Funding for a yearly or signing “Bonus” for diverse teachers
 - Funding for higher salaries or stipends (to offset cost of living) for bilingual teachers in high diversity districts
- **Incorporate language of other education bills that recommend alternative pathways to preparing teachers.** Examples of other education bills include:
 - H 1365: *An act relative to establishing a tuition free program for teachers and paraprofessionals* - creates a tuition-free program for teachers and paras to become licensed at MA public universities
 - H681: *An Act relative to teacher preparation and certification* - sets up a 1-year pilot for paid internships in high needs districts and a master corps program to incentivize high quality teachers to transfer to high needs districts
- **Explicitly eliminate licensure barriers by articulating (and requiring DESE to consider) flexible approaches to teacher license.** Examples of flexible approaches include:
 - Revisiting reciprocity policies and procedures with other states and countries
 - Create more inclusive opportunities, especially clarify/include Institute of Higher Education (IHE) in Puerto Rico that are nationally accredited
 - Recognizing course work if taken at other IHE’s, especially in IHE’s outside the four MA accredited teacher prep programs for DLE and in IHE’s internationally
 - Revisiting and extending temporary and initial teacher licenses while demand for bilingual/bicultural staff is high and while trying to increase the number of DLE programs in districts with the highest % of ELs and students from minority groups. (Note: examples of extending temporary license to 3 years (now 1 year); preliminary (initial) license now requires teacher prep program, a M.Ed. and 5 years to full licensure)

- Providing funding to IHE's and other supporting organizations such as MABE to assist with developing the competencies and skills of bilingual/bicultural educators
 - Revisiting the assessment policy and procedures for licensure: purpose, quantity, cost. For increasing staff to DLE program offering the MTEL assessment in a language other than English for those teachers teaching in the program's partner language or accepting a competency-based portfolio aligned with the National Dual Language Education Teacher Preparation Standards (NDLETPS) or graduating from an IHE where the language of instruction is English would exempt a candidate from taking the Communication and Literacy test.
 - Note: We are aware that there is a pilot program underway that would allow candidates to take a test other than the MTEL to meet the content or communication and literacy standards. We will be interested to see if the outcome increases the pass rate for diverse candidates.
 - Provide scholarships for bilingual teacher candidates to take the MTELEs
 - Provide MTEL preparation/tutoring programs for bilingual teacher candidates whose first language is not English.
- **Require DESE to collect data on language of staff** - a critical element of diversity for DLE/Bilingual programs (LOOK Act & Educator Diversity Act)
 - **Require that diversity measures begin at DESE** where diverse people with experience and knowledge of the variety of bilingual programs available at the state should be in positions of leadership.

With these recommended changes, the Educator Diversity Act will be in a stronger position to help grow DLE programs and increase teacher diversity in districts with the highest % of diverse students.

We thank you for your attention to these important matters.

Respectfully,

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