*****Massachusetts Department of***

***Elementary and Secondary Education***

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| Jeffrey C. Riley*Commissioner* |  |

# MEMORANDUM

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| **To:** | Members of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education |
| **From:**  | Jeffrey C. Riley, Commissioner  |
| **Date:**  | May 17, 2023 |
| **Subject:** | Update on Holyoke Public Schools |

*Overview*

To keep the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (Board) well informed about the progress being made by schools and districts in state receivership, I am providing regular updates.

Holyoke Public Schools (HPS or district), led by Receiver Anthony Soto, remains committed to implementing the priority areas in its [turnaround plan](https://www.doe.mass.edu/level5/districts/2022-1216holyoke-turnaround-plan.docx), which was renewed for an additional three-year term in December 2022. In the plan renewal, I committed to meeting with the Mayor of Holyoke and other city officials periodically to review the district’s performance, and in the 2024-25 school year, if not earlier, I will meet with Holyoke city and state officials to discuss potential pathways for exiting receivership. To that end, I have met with Mayor Garcia multiple times throughout the year, and we remain in communication.

Over the past seven years, the district has established many systems and structures to support continuous improvement, including developing common instructional leadership practices for school administrators and expert teachers; supporting teachers and leaders to engage in effective planning and data team meetings; and utilizing data dashboards to continuously review key academic and culture and climate indicators.

During his first full year as Receiver in 2021-22, Mr. Soto collaborated with the Holyoke community to establish a clear shared vision for the next phase of the district’s transformation. Informed by input from more than 1,000 community stakeholders, the district’s multi-year [strategic plan](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1GNvJC0RI0he-UtGe22zYwGQkQOTJ9Hcz/view) was released on August 22, 2022 and formed the basis of the district’s renewed turnaround plan in December 2022. The renewed strategic vision shared in these documents reflects the collective learnings of the community and articulates a strong path forward for Holyoke.

The district has continued to set aggressive goals for improvement, particularly focused on increasing student achievement as measured by statewide assessments, improving outcomes for multilingual learners, and reducing the chronic absenteeism rate.

*Strategic Transformation Grant Funding*

In FY2023, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, through the Office of Strategic Transformation, has provided $401,455 in strategic transformation grant funding to Holyoke. This funding is supporting key central office positions that provide supervision and day-to-day support to school leaders, and these positions will be fully absorbed into the district budget starting in FY24. FY23 Strategic Transformation grant funding also has supported the district’s work with a rezoning consultant to design middle school schedules and staffing models for the rezoned middle schools that will be opening in the 2023-24 school year.

At the May 23, 2023 Board meeting, Holyoke Receiver Anthony Soto and Deputy Commissioner Russell Johnston will be present to address the Board and answer questions.