*****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:**  | November 14, 2023 |
| **Subject:** | Public Adult Education System Overview  |

At the November 21, 2023, meeting of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's Office of Adult and Community Learning Services (ACLS) will:

* provide an overview of the newly branded Public Adult Education system of Massachusetts
* describe recent systems shifts to promote equitable access to services, program quality, and a focus on student outcomes
* preview videos highlighting students’ experience in adult education

ALCS oversees the public adult education system in Massachusetts, which is supported by a combination of state (approximately $60 million) and federal (approximately $13 million) funds.

For those striving for a better future, public adult education is the bridge between living and learning. Our programs provide students without high school degrees or with limited English proficiency with the skills, support, and credentials they need to further their education, advance their opportunities, and build the lives they want to lead. Along with the adult learners, families, communities, and the Commonwealth as a whole benefit from these programs. As the steward of the public adult education system, ACLS works to build partnerships, set professional standards, and direct state and federal funding, with the goal of making available a great foundational education for every adult who wants one.

During FY2023, ACLS rebid the entire adult education system centered on our indicators of program quality, e.g., student outcomes, equitable access, and educational leadership. The funding supports basic literacy through college and career readiness (including high school equivalency credential preparation and adult diploma programs) and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) instructional services through 74 Community Adult Learning Centers (CALCs) located in all 16 local workforce areas in the state. Through a diverse provider network that includes school districts, community colleges, and community-based organizations, approximately 20,000 adults are served each year. Thanks to significant increases in state funds ($60 million in FY23, compared to $33 million in FY19) and moderate increases in federal funds, adult education services are serving more students each year, though the demand for services continues to exceed supply. In addition to services in community settings, instruction is offered to justice-involved adults at seven county correctional facilities.

In FY22, ACLS funded its first statewide Adult Education Virtual School (AEVS) system, branded as MassLinks. A single grantee, Mount Wachusett Community College, offers online adult basic education services to eligible adult students throughout the Commonwealth. In the first year, MassLinks enrolled 462 students. Additionally, to provide access to adult learners who are unable to attend classes, instruction is also provided by regional networks of volunteers.

Further, to help put job training and career pathways within reach of all adults in Massachusetts, ACLS supports MassSTEP ESOL and MassSTEP ABE. These are Integrated Education and Training (IET) programs that provide adult education and literacy activities concurrently and contextually with workforce preparation activities and workforce training for a specific occupation or occupational cluster.

Another facet of the adult education system is the Transition to College program, which operates at 11 community colleges. In FY24, funding has been opened to four-year colleges and allows for a second year of intensive advising to promote college success.

Public adult education is essential to a more equitable future. Our high-school equivalency, vocational, and ESOL programs put students at the center and deliver a great foundational education that supports the needs of adults at no cost to them, through community-based partnerships. Our adult students have chosen to learn, overcoming obstacles and making sacrifices to build better lives. Their determination and resilience are inspiring.

We look forward to sharing more about Massachusetts adult education system with the Board on November 21. Wyvonne Stevens-Carter, Adult Education State Director, will be at the meeting to provide the overview and respond to your questions.