*****Massachusetts Department of***

***Elementary and Secondary Education***

### 75 Pleasant Street, Malden, Massachusetts 02148-4906 Telephone: (781) 338-3000 TTY: N.E.T. Relay 1-800-439-2370

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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:**  | October 9, 2020 |
| **Subject:** | Language Interpretation Services Project |

On June 25, 2020, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education issued Initial Fall School Reopening Guidance and subsequently provided additional guidance documents on a range of topics related to reopening school throughout the summer. These documents (posted [here](http://www.doe.mass.edu/covid19/on-desktop.html)), along with the amendments to the Student Learning Time regulations that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education adopted on September 29, 2020, consistently stress the importance of districts establishing ongoing, two-way communication with limited-English proficient (LEP) families to ensure they have all necessary information to support their children with whichever learning model their district has chosen.

To support districts with this regular and substantive engagement, the Department launched a Language Interpretation Services Project with 20 districts across the Commonwealth. (The full list of participating districts can be found on page 2 of this memo.) These districts, selected due to their higher percentages of dually identified students (English learners and students with disabilities) and high-needs students, are participating in two opportunities designed to expand the availability and quality of interpretation and translation for families:

* Telephonic interpretation: Through a contract with Lionbridge, Inc., districts have access to on-demand and as-needed interpretation services in over 380 languages. Each participating district has been allocated a portion of funds to use toward this contract to support ongoing engagement with families.
* Interpreter and Translator in Education Workshop Series: Through the Translation Center of the University of Massachusetts Amherst, districts were invited to send up to three bilingual district employees to an Interpreter and Translator in Education Workshop Series. This 7-module training course will provide an educational and professional setting for staff to learn more about the procedures and standards of interpretation and translation.

At the Board meeting on October 20, the Department will highlight the ongoing work of Holyoke Public Schools (HPS) to provide interpretation and translation services to LEP families, including HPS’s participation in the Language Interpretation Services Project. Senior Associate Commissioner Russell Johnston and Lauren Woo, Director of the Office of Strategic Transformation, will provide a brief summary of the project. They will be joined by Dr. Alberto Vázquez Matos, Receiver/Superintendent of HPS, and Nicholas Magnolia, coordinator of HPS interpretation and translation services. They will provide reflections on their experience leveraging the services to assist the district’s work to foster two-way, culturally responsive communication with families.

Districts participating in the Language Interpreter Services Project by assistance region:

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| Strategic Transformation | West/Central | Coastal |
| Holyoke | Amherst | Boston |
| Lawrence | Easthampton | Brockton |
| Southbridge | Fitchburg | Chelsea |
| Springfield Empowerment Zone | Gardner | Everett |
|  | Northampton | Fall River |
|  | Springfield | Lowell |
|  | Worcester | Lynn |
|  |  | New Bedford |
|  |  | Revere |
|  |  | Salem |