**Minutes of the Special Meeting**

**of the Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education**

**Meeting held virtually via Zoom**
**Tuesday April 22, 2025, 2:05 p.m. - 2:57 p.m.**

**Members of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education Present:**

**Katherine Craven**,Chair,Brookline

**Matthew Hills**, Vice-Chair, Newton

**Ioannis Asikis,** Brookline, Student Member

**Ericka Fisher,** Worcester

**Christina Grant**, Cambridge

**Farzana Mohamed,** Newton

**Michael Moriarty,** Holyoke

**Dálida Rocha,** Worcester

**Mary Ann Stewart,** Lexington

**Patrick Tutwiler**, Secretary of Education, Andover

**Martin West,** Newton

**Patrick Tutwiler,** Interim Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education

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Chair Craven called the meeting to order at 2:05 p.m., and members introduced themselves. Chair Craven announced that today’s Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (Board) special meeting, like all open meetings of the Board, is being livestreamed and recorded.

**Selection of Commissioner for Recommendation to Secretary — Discussion and Vote**

Chair Craven gave an overview of the Commissioner search process. Chair Craven stated that under the statute, a two-thirds majority (8 out of 11 members) is required to recommend a candidate to the Secretary to appoint as Commissioner. She then invited Board members to speak on who they believe is the most suitable candidate to serve as DESE Commissioner. Board members each spoke on the search process, the qualifications of the candidates, and who they would be supporting for the role of Commissioner.

**Vice Chair Hills** began by commending the quality of the three finalists, crediting Isaacson, Miller and the advisory committee—particularly the four voting members—for their work. He emphasized that selecting the next commissioner is the board’s most critical decision, with far-reaching implications for the success of their work. He outlined his ideal candidate as someone with a compelling vision, strong prioritization and implementation skills, and the ability to inspire urgency and align others around a strategy. The next Commissioner must be able to navigate financial and governmental complexity, influence both internal and external stakeholders, and collaborate effectively with the Secretary of Education and Governor’s office. Vice Chair Hills highlighted the importance of leadership experience, especially someone who has learned from both successes and failures. Ultimately, he expressed his support for **Pedro Martinez**, stating that Mr. Martinez best meets the moment and the qualities the Board should be looking for in the next commissioner.

**Member Asikis** began by acknowledging the strengths and bold ideas that each of the three finalists—Jack, Lily, and Pedro—brought to the table, noting how each candidate challenged the Board to think differently about what’s possible for education in Massachusetts. He announced his vote for **Pedro Martinez**. What stood out to him was Mr. Martinez’s deep understanding of data and his ability to translate it into meaningful action for students across the state. He praised Mr. Martinez’s focus on the connection between student outcomes and poverty, his emphasis on understanding the district context, and his commitment to building alignment from the state to the local level. Member Asikis was also personally moved by Mr. Martinez’s story of immigrating from Mexico at age six, which resonated with his own experience and the stories of many students in Massachusetts schools today. He highlighted Mr. Martinez’s track record on supporting student mental health as evidence of his readiness to act in partnership with stakeholders. Member Asikis concluded by stating his belief that Mr. Martinez offers the best chance to change the course of education in the Commonwealth and has the proven ability to execute on a clear, ambitious plan.

**Member Fisher** expressed her belief of the strength of all three candidates, acknowledging their experience and passion for education, but stated that she would be voting for **Pedro Martinez**. She highlighted his strong leadership in previous roles. With eight years of experience as a superintendent and six years as Chief Financial Officer, she believes his financial knowledge is vital as the state faces potential shifts in funding. Fisher also noted Mr. Martinez’s commitment to data transparency, his focus on Career and Technical Education (CTE), and his success in raising teacher salaries in Chicago. Additionally, she praised his dedication to addressing equity issues, particularly his efforts to increase dual language schools and programming.

**Member Grant** expressed gratitude to the search committee and board for their diligent work in narrowing the field to three strong candidates. She stated she would be voting for **Pedro Martinez** and highlighted his ability to manage complex systems across multiple levels, including local, city, state, and federal. Member Grant was particularly impressed by Mr. Martinez’s approach to innovation, emphasizing that it involves understanding data, research, and community-specific needs. She noted Mr. Martinez’s leadership in high school redesign efforts in San Antonio, which became a model for the nation. Lastly, Member Grant commended Mr. Martinez's deep commitment to diverse learners and the communities they live in, underscoring his understanding of both data and the narratives behind it.

**Member Mohamed** expressed appreciation for all three candidates, recognizing their competence and commitment. She congratulated the search committee for presenting such a strong group of individuals. After listening to her colleagues, she agreed that **Pedro Martinez** is the right choice for the state at this time. Member Mohamed highlighted Mr. Martinez’s ability to navigate complex relationships, build sustainable constituencies, and operationalize plans effectively.

**Member Moriarty** stated that he would vote for **Pedro Martinez**. Member Moriarty also mentioned the other candidates, noting Lily Laux’s strong research and mastery of literacy policy, which he found particularly impressive. Member Moriarty shared his confidence that the selection process produced candidates who would not harm Massachusetts and would have solid futures. He praised Mr. Martinez’s commitment to students experiencing poverty and his clear stance that low expectations should be eradicated. Member Moriarty also appreciated Mr. Martinez’s focus on engaging the various stakeholders essential to the role of commissioner.

**Member Rocha** thanked the search committee and Chairwoman Craven for their work in bringing forward three strong candidates, expressing appreciation for the candidates’ commitment to Massachusetts and desire to lead as commissioner. Reflecting on the state’s challenges, particularly the widening gaps between English learners and students of color, Member Rocha shared her perspective as an immigrant, English learner, and woman of color, emphasizing the importance of addressing these issues, especially in literacy. She felt that **Lily Laux** was well-suited to lead, given her experience navigating multiracial and multilingual environments and her ability to engage stakeholders effectively. Member Rocha valued Ms. Laux’s data-driven approach and her ability to prioritize the lived experiences of students and families. Member Rocha indicated she would vote for Lily Laux.

**Member Stewart** highlighted the value of hearing from three candidates with diverse backgrounds and perspectives, noting how this insight was crucial for assessing leadership potential. She considered the candidates' alignment with the state's priorities, their depth of experience, commitment to equity and inclusion, data-driven approaches, and ability to collaborate and engage stakeholders. Member Stewart appreciated Lily Laux’s understanding of the state's needs. She found Ms. Laux’s responses to questions, particularly regarding family engagement, to be deeply thoughtful and reflective of her commitment to the role. Member Stewart expressed support for **Lily Laux**.

**Member West** expressed gratitude for the opportunity to hear from fellow board members and thanked the search committee and Isaacson, Miller for their contributions to the selection process. Member West praised all three finalists, highlighting Jack Elsey’s impressive work in educator recruitment in Michigan, Lily Laux’s exceptional interview and alignment with Massachusetts' priorities, and Pedro Martinez’s strong track record as a leader in complex organizations. Member West noted that Mr. Martinez’s district leadership roles, including in Chicago, had similarities to a state role. He appreciated Mr. Martinez’s nuanced view on data, particularly the value of growth data in assessing schools’ contributions to student learning. Member West stated his support for **Pedro Martinez** as the best choice for Massachusetts at this time, although he acknowledged it was a close decision and would have supported a dual recruitment of both Ms. Laux and Mr. Martinez if possible.

**Chair Craven** expressed her strong support for **Pedro Martinez** as the next commissioner, emphasizing his proven track record of advocating for students, particularly those experiencing poverty. She praised his ability to stand up for kids, his innovative approach to education, and his capacity to foster collaboration among diverse constituencies, including local districts, teachers' unions, and the state legislature. Chair Craven highlighted Mr. Martinez’s personal experience, noting that his background as an immigrant provides a unique perspective on overcoming achievement gaps. She also appreciated his approach to data, focusing on the human element and engaging directly with communities. Chair Craven stressed that Mr. Martinez’s leadership and professionalism, particularly in navigating challenges at both the state and federal levels, make him the ideal choice for Massachusetts at this critical moment.

**Secretary Tutwiler** expressed his gratitude for the collaborative efforts of Isaacson, Miller and his team in guiding the thoughtful and robust process of selecting candidates. He acknowledged the high quality of the candidates. After reflecting on the role and his own experiences working closely with educational leaders, Secretary Tutwiler ultimately gave his support to **Pedro Martinez**. He highlighted Mr. Martinez’s proven track record of success, especially in challenging contexts such as political instability and a global pandemic. Secretary Tutwiler praised Mr. Martinez’s ability to foster collaboration, create conditions for success, and innovate in key areas such as literacy and reimagining high school education. He emphasized that Massachusetts needs bold, proven leadership that balances a willingness to partner, confront tough challenges, and adapt to changing situations. In Secretary Tutwiler’s view, Mr. Martinez exemplifies these qualities, and he expressed his full support for his candidacy.

Chair Craven then asked for a motion for a roll call vote.

**On a motion duly made and seconded, it was:**

**VOTED:**  **that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education recommends Pedro**  **Martinez for the position of Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary**  **Education.**

The vote, by roll call, 9-0-2. The motion passed.

**On a motion duly made and seconded, it was:**

**VOTED:**  **that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education authorizes the Chair to**  **submit Pedro Martinez to the Secretary of Education for approval and**  **appointment as Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education, and**  **authorizes the Chair or her designee to negotiate with Pedro Martinez over the**  **specific terms and conditions of his/her appointment as Commissioner.**

The vote, by roll call, 9-0-2. The motion passed.

**On a motion duly made and seconded, it was:**

**VOTED:**  **that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education adjourns the meeting at 2:57p.m., subject to the call of the Chair.**

The vote was unanimous.

 Respectfully submitted,

Patrick Tutwiler

Interim Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education

and Secretary to the Board