



January 15, 2010

## *Education Reform Legislation Passed*

The Massachusetts Legislature has approved the most sweeping educational reform bill since 1993. [An Act Relative to the Achievement Gap](#) (S.2247) passed both the House and Senate on January 14 and now goes to the Governor for final approval. This bill provides important opportunities to improve student achievement in underperforming schools and districts. Boston Superintendent Carol Johnson has developed a five-year Acceleration Agenda to reduce the student achievement gap which will benefit from this bill. This legislation will greatly strengthen the Commonwealth's Race to the Top application for federal competitive grants. Key provisions of the legislation include:

- Provides superintendents with the tools to turn around underperforming schools by providing greater administrative flexibility in staffing and school work rules and the ability to negotiate changes in collective bargaining agreements through a resolution process. Teachers in underperforming schools may be dismissed for "good cause" but have a right to appeal through expedited arbitration.
- Gives the state Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education broader authority to intervene in persistently underperforming schools and underperforming school districts.
- Allows 14 new in-district charter schools (Horace Mann) to be created without union approval as currently required, with at least 4 of those schools reserved for Boston.
- Doubles charter school seats over 7 years in districts with the 10% lowest student performance statewide. Districts losing students to charter schools receive tuition reimbursements from the state for a longer period but financial support after the first year is substantially less than the current formula.

The Research Bureau has joined with several other business and nonprofit organizations to support fundamental reform to improve student achievement, turnaround underperforming and chronically underperforming schools and expand charter school options.

Passage of this legislation in an environment of strong competing interests is testimony to the leadership of Education Chairs Senator Robert O'Leary and Representative Martha Walz, Ways and Means Chairs Senator Steven Panagiotakos and Representative Charles Murphy, House Assistant Majority Leader Ronald Mariano, Senate President Therese Murray and House Speaker Robert DeLeo.

The success of this effort reflects the belief that sweeping educational reform, not incremental change, is needed now to close the achievement gap that is persistent in the state's underperforming schools and that the outcome will have long-term benefits for the economy of Massachusetts.

