
H.3759 *An Act relative to expanding access to high quality early education in Boston*

Jason Sachs

- Chairwoman Chang-Diaz, Chairwoman Peisch, and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Jason Sachs and I am the Executive Director of Early Childhood for the Boston Public Schools.
- I am here on behalf of Mayor Martin J. Walsh and Superintendent Tommy Chang in strong support of H.3759 *An Act relative to expanding access to high quality early education in Boston*, sponsored by Representative Nick Collins.
- Boston has been moving closer to its goal of providing a high-quality pre-K seat for every 4-year old in the city. BPS data indicate that our investment in high-quality pre-K translate directly into closing early racial and class achievement gaps.
- Boston is a national leader in pre-K education, due in large part to the program quality improvements made in Boston Public Schools, which have recently been replicated in community provider settings through the local “K1DS” initiative and through the federal Pre-K Expansion Grant effort.
- While Boston has been increasing early education investments within the school district, the Mayor’s Universal Pre-Kindergarten Advisory Committee has been studying ways to enable a full scale, high-quality, universal, mixed delivery system in Boston.
- The Committee has found that Boston has mostly solved the overall access challenge but continues to face a significant shortage of quality seats. Additionally, quality differs substantially by neighborhood.
- Based on our findings, the Advisory Committee has recommended to Mayor Walsh that in order to achieve our shared UPK goals, additional funding is needed to:
 - Invest in reducing gaps in teacher compensation, assisting teachers to earn advanced credentials, and providing tuition assistance in community-based settings;
 - Sustain PEG programs beyond the life of the federal grant;
 - Strategically expand the number of BPS seats;

- Increase seats in community-based organizations that meet the City’s quality thresholds in shortage neighborhoods;
 - Invest in improving quality in community-based organizations that are close to meeting quality thresholds ; and
 - Create a citywide oversight system for Pre-K investment and program delivery.
- In Boston, we have a clear vision for unlocking the potential of early education not just for Boston but as a model for the rest of the state. I will now turn it over to Katie King from the Mayor’s Office to discuss how we propose to make these vital investments.

Katie King

- Good morning, members of the Committee, my name is Katie King and I am Mayor Walsh’s Director of Intergovernmental Relations. Thank you for the opportunity to speak today.
- Through H.3759, Mayor Walsh is proposing to close the “quality gap” in pre-k seats in Boston with surplus revenue raised in Boston from the Convention Center Fund.
- This bill would redirect the amounts generated by two Convention Center Fund revenues that are produced exclusively in the City of Boston: the Boston Sightseeing Surcharge and the Boston Vehicular Rental Transaction Surcharge.
- Both of these charges are already in existence and neither revenue source is directly related to Convention Center business. This proposal would allow us to dedicate \$16.5 million annually to early education in Boston without putting the Convention Center at risk.
- Although Convention Center revenue is almost entirely raised in Boston, Fund surpluses have been used to balance the statewide budget in recent years. In FY16 alone, the Convention Center Fund ended with a balance of \$88.9 million, of which the Commonwealth withdrew \$60 million to close the year in balance.
- The language in H.3759 allows these revenue sources to revert back to the Fund if steps are taken to show the Commonwealth is moving forward with the expansion. However, without an expansion, the Convention Center Fund will have a recurring surplus of at least \$18 million.
- Boston residents have a strong claim on the revenue generated within the city, and supporting early education will make a difference in the lives of thousands of children and families in Boston, and will provide all children with equal opportunities for success.



- I respectfully ask the Committee to report H.3759 out favorably. Thank you for your time today and I am happy to answer any questions.

