

Offered by City Councilor Julia Mejia



CITY OF BOSTON IN CITY COUNCIL

ORDER FOR A HEARING ON STATE RECEIVERSHIP FOR BOSTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

- WHEREAS,** In February of 2020, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) published a review, finding that 34 of BPS schools had student populations which scored in the lowest 10% on the state’s MCAS standardized exam, which triggered fears that the state would push for receivership of Boston Public Schools; *and*
- WHEREAS,** In response to this report, Superintendent Brenda Cassellius worked to develop a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with DESE, outlining several goals and initiatives, including bolstering support for students with special needs, establishing equitable access to student supports, and focusing on academic improvements in the lowest-performing schools; *and*
- WHEREAS,** Since the MOU was agreed to, many of these improvements have been underway, including the hiring of dozens of family liaisons, social workers, and other funding for wraparound support; *and*
- WHEREAS,** While many improvements still need to be done, some members of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) have once again called for state receivership of Boston Public Schools; *and*
- WHEREAS,** State receivership of Boston Public Schools has received opposition from parents, students and educators, and other local leaders; *and*
- WHEREAS,** While the Commonwealth has taken receivership of school districts in the past, the districts which are still under receivership—Southbridge for the past five years, Holyoke for the past six years, and Lawrence for the past nine years—remain among the 10 lowest-ranked school districts in the state; *and*
- WHEREAS,** According to DESE-published data, BPS has outperformed all the DESE-controlled receivership districts in both ELA and Math, at both the elementary and secondary levels, both before and during the pandemic; *and*

WHEREAS, 75% Boston Public Schools students are Black and Latinx and we need local school authorities who best understand the community to lead and fight for the academic achievement of BPS students; *and*

WHEREAS, While the Boston Public Schools has an Office of Equity working to implement a racial equity protocol across the district, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Department of Education does not use a racial equity protocol; *and*

WHEREAS, Research by Domingo Morel points to the fact that ‘predominantly Black school districts are more likely to be taken over, and that cities with a greater share of Black city council members are more likely to face takeovers;’ *and*

WHEREAS, Previous state interventions in Boston Public Schools, with the Dever and the Holland, have similarly produced few improvements, unchecked suspensions, and a 50% decrease in Latinx teachers and the destruction of the dual language program at the Dever; *and*

WHEREAS, BPS in each of the last four years has had higher teacher retention rates than the receivership districts under direct DESE control, with rates particularly low in Holyoke and Southbridge, raising serious questions about the disruptive impact of state intervention on both the workforce and students; *and*

WHEREAS, The City of Boston has declared racism a public health crisis and we have an obligation as a City to ensure that students in Boston Public Schools are on a pathway to academic success and that the people closest to the issue are able to determine what success looks like; ***NOW THEREFORE BE IT***

ORDERED:

That the appropriate committee of the Boston City Council holds a hearing regarding state receivership of Boston Public Schools. Representatives from the City of Boston, Boston Public Schools, the Boston Teachers Union, BEJA, youth leaders, members of the public, and any other interested parties shall be invited and are encouraged to attend.

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