



Press Release

Healey-Driscoll Administration Celebrates \$10 Million Investment in Workforce Training for English Learners

As the Trump Administration moves to limit access to adult education, Massachusetts is expanding support for 3,000 additional English learners and growing the workforce



BOSTON — The Healey-Driscoll Administration today is celebrating a \$10 million investment that was proposed by Governor Healey and included in the final recent Fair Share supplemental budget that will expand access to workforce training programs for 3,000-3,500 residents and reduce the waitlist for English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) services. By aligning and leveraging other state resources, the administration expects to provide career-related ESOL to a total of 4,500-5,000 additional individuals over the next two years. Currently, Massachusetts has nearly 100 adult education and ESOL programs serving over 30,000 participants.

At the same time that Massachusetts is stepping up to expand access to ESOL and other adult education as a workforce strategy, the Trump Administration is withholding critical support. The U.S. Department of Education has communicated that it is withholding Adult Basic Education Grants to States, which is nearly \$13 million for Massachusetts. This annual funding was already appropriated by the U.S. Congress and was expected to be received by states on July 1. These federal cuts threaten to undermine services for English learners just as demand continues to grow—making the state’s investment even more urgent.

“We have employers across Massachusetts who need skilled talent to fill open positions. Connecting workers with training programs and English classes will make sure they have the skills that employers are looking for in today’s economy,” said Governor Maura Healey. “We’re grateful to the Legislature for approving this funding, which will support our people, our businesses and our economy.”

“We know adult education helps families and our economy succeed. With this funding, we’re expanding access to the skills and supports that English learners need to get jobs,” said Lieutenant Governor Kim Driscoll. “This investment is about creating pathways to success and supporting a workforce for employers in our state.”

This investment will help more residents gain the language skills they need to succeed in in-demand jobs, connect to career pathways, and fully participate in the state’s economy. The funding will also support the creation of a coordinated statewide ESOL strategy through the administration’s Workforce Skills Cabinet.

“Every learner in Massachusetts deserves the chance to pursue their goals with dignity and support,” said Education Secretary Dr. Patrick Tutwiler. “Our vision is a Massachusetts where every student has the tools they need to succeed, and these dollars will go directly toward helping people build language, career readiness and technical skills that unlock careers, education, and confidence.”

“Building on the Healey-Driscoll Administration’s workforce agenda, this expansion of ESOL will connect directly with employers and sector-based job training and education, and in turn, create increased access and opportunity for Massachusetts’ workforce,” said Labor and Workforce Development Secretary Lauren Jones. “This intentional strategy will bring together employers, workforce training providers, and academic partners to improve employment outcomes, deliver a more equitable workforce, and strengthen the state’s economic competitiveness.”

“Funding for ESOL programs serves individuals, employers and communities,” said Elementary and Secondary Education Commissioner Pedro Martinez. “Classes that are tied to the workplace help adults both support their families and serve as models of lifelong learning for their children.” Guided by state’s workforce agenda to attract, retain, and develop talent, adult education/ESOL providers collaborate with local MassHire Workforce Board and Career Centers on recruitment, career services, and job placement activities. This commitment builds on the Healey-Driscoll Administration’s strategic workforce development investments to remove barriers to employment for work-authorized individuals and connect them with jobs and training in sectors such as health care and human services, hospitality, and manufacturing.

Expanding access to English language learning and workforce training means we're helping people gain the skills they need to put money in their pockets and find jobs they love—so they can build a life right here in Massachusetts,” said Senate President Karen E. Spilka (D-Ashland). “I’m proud of the Senate’s work to secure this funding and send it to the Governor’s desk quickly, and I look forward to seeing the positive impact these programs will have across the Commonwealth.”

“An investment in English language learning is an investment in our workforce and in our economy, which is why the funding that was included in the supplemental budget for these educational grants is so important,” said House Speaker Ronald J. Mariano (D-Quincy). “I want to thank Governor Healey, my colleagues in the House, and our partners in the Senate for recognizing the importance of supporting this program.”

Statements of Support:

State Senator Michael J. Rodrigues (D-Westport), Chair of the Senate Committee on Ways and Means:

“I’m thrilled to see another collaborative effort between the Legislature and the Healey-Driscoll Administration pay off with the success of the English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) incentive program. Providing an additional 5,000 individuals with workforce training skills only adds to the Commonwealth’s economic viability. This investment is especially important with the federal government cutting support for these critical educational and vocational training incentives. We need to continue to support businesses in their effort to attract and retain a highly skilled workforce economy.”

State Senator Jason Lewis (D-Winchester), Senate Chair of the Joint Committee on Education:

“I was proud to vote in June for this \$10 million investment to support English-Language Learners with increased access to workforce training and language programs. Thousands more people will be able to utilize these programs to help fill in-demand jobs in Massachusetts and build up our economy.”

State Representative Ken Gordon (D-Bedford), House Chair of the Joint Committee on Education:

"This represents an important investment, not only for our residents but also for assisting our important industries in accessing well-trained workers."

State Senator Jake Oliveira (D-Ludlow), Senate Chair of the Joint Committee on Labor and Workforce Development:

"This critical investment will not only uplift thousands of English learners across Massachusetts but also strengthen our workforce to meet the demands of our growing economy. As the Senate Chair of the Joint Committee on Labor and Workforce Development, I'm proud to continue to work to build a more inclusive and resilient economy, one where everyone has an opportunity to meaningful employment and success. This funding will do just that."

Eastern Bank Executive Chair and Chair of the Board of Directors Bob Rivers:

“This investment in additional resources importantly acknowledges the needs of the Massachusetts workforce as well as the opportunities to strengthen it,” said Bob Rivers, Executive Chair and Chair of the Board of Directors of Eastern Bank. “Recognizing the important role

corporate philanthropy also plays, I am pleased to announce today a Career-Focused English Proficiency Initiative being led by the Eastern Bank Foundation working with our many community partners, to enhance a system that prepares, employs, and advances the English language skills of workers at scale so that our local employers have access to a robust workforce aligned with workforce needs and grounded in the science of how adults learn language.”

Mount Wachusett Community College President James L. Vander Hooven:

“The Massachusetts community colleges are grateful for Governor Healey’s commitment to providing ESOL education across the Commonwealth. We stand ready to provide these much-needed services.”

Massachusetts Business Roundtable President and CEO JD Chesloff:

“At the Massachusetts Business Roundtable, we are focused on breaking down barriers to employment for people in Massachusetts who are ready to work and qualified to fill open jobs. Chief among those barriers is language, leaving too many people on the sidelines just as employers are looking for talent. The strategic and important investment in ESOL being celebrated today will help employers grow and thrive statewide while providing a pathway to opportunity for untapped talent across the state. We applaud the Healey-Driscoll Administration for its leadership on this issue and look forward to working collaboratively to develop a coordinated, statewide ESOL strategy.”

Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition Executive Director Elizabeth Sweet:

“Investments in workforce training and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) programs do not just benefit immigrants, but all of Massachusetts. Our state needs more workers in frontline industries like healthcare, and immigrants are eager to fill those jobs, strengthening our economy and taking care of those in need. We applaud the Healey-Driscoll administration for this crucial investment, and for supporting immigrants when leaders in Washington continue to push harmful, hateful anti-immigrant policies.”

Jewish Vocational Service Boston CEO Kira Khazatsky:

“We are thrilled that the Healey-Driscoll administration recognizes that increasing resources for vocational ESOL is the right strategy to meet this moment. Students get exactly what they want—English language skills that allow them to get hired and succeed in the workplace—and employers get access to talent they need for their businesses to grow and thrive. With thousands of people on waitlists for ESOL, eager to build their skills and launch their careers, vocational ESOL funding is a strategic investment that helps both students and employers.”

English for New Bostonians Executive Director and English for Strong Economy Coalition member Claudia Green:

“As we go forward in the current tyranny being imposed on immigrant communities by the Federal Administration, Massachusetts is making a positive, no-nonsense step to promote economic mobility, as well as the call from private industry for relief and action. With timely, top-level leadership and expanded, vocationally focused ESOL training delivered by a network of savvy providers, immigrant workers and business owners will contribute to their full potential and keep our economy strong.”