

## Massachusetts Advocates for Children 2023 Legislative Priorities

### **An Act Relative to the Training, Assessment, and Assignment of Qualified School Interpreters in Educational Settings (H 437, S 253)**

This legislation directs the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) to create standards and competencies for the hiring and assignment of school interpreters to provide parents and students with limited English proficiency (LEP) competent interpretation services. This bill incorporates the recommendations of DESE's School Interpreter Task Force, formed pursuant to section 81 of chapter 154 of the acts of 2018. School districts are already required to provide interpreter services for families with LEP pursuant to state and federal law.

### **An Act to Ensure Equitable Access to Education, Including Special Education Services, for All Students in Massachusetts (H 454, S 249)**

This legislation directs the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) to publish data on the delivery of educational opportunities to students in a manner that will help further equity regardless of a student's race, ethnicity, primary language, disability, or sex. In the future, this legislation will require that DESE publish data in a similar manner regarding access to special education services for students throughout the Commonwealth.

### **An Act to Improve Augmentative and Alternative Communications and Opportunities for Children with Disabilities (H 433, S 326)**

This legislation helps ensure that all teachers who apply for an initial Massachusetts educator license receive instruction on the appropriate use of augmentative and alternative communication devices for children with disabilities who are nonverbal or who have limited speech. The bill directs DESE to amend teacher licensure regulations as necessary to meet the needs of this population of students, enhancing the lives of thousands of children, including children with autism, cerebral palsy, and acquired brain injury who rely on augmentative and alternative communication methods to interact with others. This legislation builds upon Chapter 299 of the Acts of 2010, which required only certain special education teachers to have training on the appropriate use of augmentative and alternative communication. This bill will help improve outcomes for students as well as reduce costs for school districts by facilitating inclusion and supporting placement of children with disabilities who are nonverbal or who have limited speech in the least restrictive environment.

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