



Broad coalition of leaders gathers to support education reform legislation

Federal stimulus money provides an opportunity for state education

Boston - On Wednesday, October 7, an unprecedented and diverse alliance of business, community, civic and education leaders announced the formation of the Race to the Top Coalition at a State House press conference. Convened by The Boston Foundation, the Race to the Top Coalition was created to support education innovation, seek passage of reform legislation in the state and secure the Commonwealth's share of \$4.35 billion in federal Race to the Top American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funding.

"The prospect of receiving hundreds of millions of dollars in federal funding from President Barack Obama's \$4.35 billion Race to the Top stimulus money at a time when education is threatened with budget cuts in the Commonwealth demands that we act now," said Paul S. Grogan, President and CEO of The Boston Foundation. "Too many children are being denied the opportunity to learn and succeed, making this a critical civil rights issue for our time. Now we have the opportunity to do the right thing for our children – and get paid for it."

The Race to the Top Coalition is comprised of leaders of 11 groups so far, including: Black Leaders for Excellence in Education, The Boston Foundation, Boston Leaders for Education, The Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce, Leaders for Education, Massachusetts Charter Public School Association, Mass High Tech Council, Mass Insight, Progressive Business Leaders Network, Stand for Children and Strategic Grant Partners.

Race to the Top funds will offer support to both traditional and non-traditional public schools throughout the Commonwealth. These funds will allow Massachusetts to enact educational reforms that increase the options for parents and students, teachers and educators, and cities and towns. States will have to compete for Race to the Top funds, with applications expected to be due by the end of the year. Award grants will only go to states that demonstrate a coordinated commitment to reform across several guidelines intended to accelerate change and boost achievement.

As part of the Race to the Top, President Obama has challenged states to foster innovation and to expand access to successful charter schools. His initiative calls for states to show significant movement in their education reform efforts with a specific emphasis on increasing the number of charter schools and creating programs to deal with chronically underperforming schools. Governor Deval Patrick introduced legislation in August that calls for a doubling of the charter cap in the state's lowest performing districts and the implementation of a set of strategies to address underperforming schools

as part of his Readiness Schools agenda. Earlier this summer, Mayor Thomas M. Menino called for the creation of in-district charter schools that would allow districts take over and run failing schools.

The Race to the Top Coalition supports the reforms proposed by both the Governor and Mayor Menino and is committed to working through all of its member groups to ensure that reform legislation is passed by the State Legislature this fall.

The coalition represents a wide range of civic, business and community leaders from urban and suburban backgrounds.

“After years of research and close examination, it is clear that charter schools and similar reform efforts work for our children, especially for those who are locked into large urban school environments where the achievement gap has been persistent,” said Bennie Wiley, former President of The Partnership, Principal of the Wiley Group, and a leader of the Black Leaders for Excellence in Education. “We must take full advantage of innovative school models. These are the solution and it is time to fully utilize them.”

The Coalition seeks to build on the long history of reform and innovation in education, including the Education Reform Act of 1993 which essentially created the charter school movement and implemented the state’s widely recognized and emulated MCAS tests. It aims to keep Massachusetts at the forefront of a national reform effort by successfully passing legislation this year and securing the Race to the Top funds.

More information on the Race to the Top Coalition is available at <http://www.racetothetopcoalition.org>

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