Expanding Early Literacy High Dosage Tutoring to Address Massachusetts' Early Literacy Crisis

Massachusetts has an early literacy crisis. Just 42% of the Commonwealth's third graders met or exceeded expectations in reading on the 2024 MCAS exams. Even more startling: 76% of low-income students, 73% of Black students, 78% of Latino students, and 86% of children with disabilities didn't meet expectations.

High-Dosage Tutoring is a Proven, High-Impact Strategy

During the 2023-24 school year, the One8 Foundation funded a high-dosage tutoring program in 13 public school districts across the state, each serving high-concentrations of students from low-income families. The program is a one-to-one virtual tutoring model whereby students receive 15 minutes of virtual tutoring every day during the school day from the same, highly trained tutor. The program targets first graders who have not mastered Kindergarten reading skills and therefore have gaps in their learning. If these gaps are left unaddressed, these students cannot access first grade curricula and will likely fall further behind over the course of the school year and beyond. A Johns Hopkins University analysis of how this model affected student literacy found:

- **Participating students gained <u>five and a half months of additional learning</u> on average relative to normal student growth across the country.**
  - *All* student subgroups experienced substantial additional learning gains from participating in the program, including Black students, Latino students, English learners, and students with disabilities.

Each district participating in the program had to be using a proven core curriculum based on the science of reading or be in the process of adopting one.

Creating a First Grade Literacy Safety Net

The outcomes data show that this high-dosage tutoring program could be the intervention the state needs to finally address the early literacy crisis. In theory, over time, schools with strong Tier 1 instruction and safety net tutoring could expect to see reading proficiency rates of 70-80% for their second graders compared to 3rd grade MCAS results that show just 42% of students are proficient in third grade. A statewide first-grade literacy safety net for students in schools that are using evidence-based curriculum and that have high concentrations of low-income students for ~$25M annually. (See details on page 2)

Governor Healey's proposed FY2026 supplemental budget, House Bill #55, includes $25 million in line-item 1596-2515 for high-dosage early literacy tutoring to support 10,000 students in grades K-3, with priority given to students in grades 1.

The legislature – in partnership with the Healey administration – should commit to an **annual state investment of at least $25 million for early literacy high-dosage tutoring** programs focused on first grade students across the Commonwealth to meet the need of reaching 10,000 students. This allocation should be in the form of an annual **funding commitment of $25 million for at least five years**, to ensure that state funding is sufficient to replace the current reliance on the significant philanthropic funding that will not continue beyond the 2024-25 school year. An annual state commitment of $ 25 million over the next five years will allow the state to explore the possibility of moving to a cost-share model with districts in future years.

ESTIMATES		ASSUMPTION NOTES
1st graders in Massachusetts districts with low-income rates over 50%	25,826	Based on 2023-24 state data
x % behind grade level	74%	Student-weighted average based on 2024 3rd grade MCAS
Total eligible population	**19,111**	
x % using strong Tier 1 curriculum	53%	Based on October 2023 Boston Globe data collecting and reporting
Cost per tutoring seat	$2,500	Based on One8 Foundation funding of 1:1 tutoring seats
Total 1st Grade Literacy Safety Net Cost	**$25.3M**	