

# HOUSE . . . . . No. 3979

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## The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, July 21, 2021.

The committee on Education to whom was referred the petition (accompanied by bill, House, No. 552) of Antonio F. D. Cabral and others relative to the training, assessment, and assignment of qualified school interpreters in educational settings, reports recommending that the accompanying bill (House, No. 3979) ought to pass.

For the committee,

ALICE HANLON PEISCH.

**HOUSE . . . . . No. 3979**

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**The Commonwealth of Massachusetts**

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**In the One Hundred and Ninety-Second General Court  
(2021-2022)**  
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An Act relative to the training, assessment, and assignment of qualified school interpreters in educational settings.

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:*

1           SECTION 1. Chapter 69 of the General Laws is hereby amended by inserting the  
2 following new section:-

3           Section 37. Training, assessment, and use of qualified school interpreters in educational  
4 settings

5           (a) The following words, unless the context clearly indicates otherwise, shall have the  
6 following meanings:

7           “Department”, the department of elementary and secondary education;

8           “Limited English proficient (LEP) person”, an individual who has a limited ability to  
9 read, write, speak or understand English because the person uses primarily a language other than  
10 English. This includes LEP parents or guardians of minor children, regardless of the children’s  
11 LEP status;

12 “Interpretation”, the immediate oral rendering of an utterance from a source language  
13 into a target language;

14 “Interpreter”, a person who has demonstrated language proficiency in English and at least  
15 one other language and is readily able to interpret spoken language from English to the target  
16 language and from the target language to English, and who also has knowledge and  
17 understanding of the pertinent subject matter to be translated, the role of the interpreter in school  
18 settings, and ethics and confidentiality with respect to interpretation;

19 “Parent”, a natural, adoptive, or foster parent of a child, a guardian, or an individual  
20 acting in the place of a natural or adoptive parent (including a grandparent, stepparent, or other  
21 relative) with whom the child lives, or an individual who is legally responsible for the child’s  
22 welfare;

23 “Specialized meeting”, a meeting requiring a high level of interpretation skills including  
24 but not limited to discussion regarding: an Individualized Education Program (IEP); a safety plan  
25 or behavioral intervention plan (BIP); matters regarding school discipline; matters regarding  
26 special education due process; placement in an English Learner Education (ELE) program;  
27 development of or changes to an Individual 504 plan; addressing bullying complaints; or the use  
28 of physical restraint or seclusion of students;

29 “Standard meeting”, a parent conference, community meeting, or other school gathering  
30 that does not have legal context.

31 “Tier 1 interpreter”, an interpreter whose language proficiency need not be formally  
32 assessed;

33 “Tier 2 interpreter”, an interpreter who, after a formal assessment process to be  
34 determined by the department, demonstrates an understanding of basic educational terminology  
35 used in school settings, participates in ongoing professional development in interpreting, and  
36 exhibits tier-2 competency pursuant to subsection 2 of this section and department regulations;

37 “Tier 3 interpreter”, an interpreter who, after a formal assessment process to be  
38 determined by the department, understands specialized educational terminology used in school  
39 settings, participates in ongoing professional development in interpreting, and exhibits tier-3  
40 competency pursuant to subsection 2 of this section and department regulations.

41 (b) Consistent with the recommendations of the School Interpreters Task Force, as  
42 authorized by section 81 of chapter 154 of the acts of 2018, the department shall: (1) develop and  
43 administer a system for training, assessing, and determining qualifications of interpreters in  
44 educational settings with assurance that tier 3 interpreters shall be used for all specialized  
45 meetings, tier 2 or 3 interpreters may be used for all standard meetings and tier 1 interpreters  
46 may be used during spontaneous, unannounced meetings or communication scenarios that occur  
47 in schools when a tier 3 or 2 interpreter is not available; (2) develop and make available an  
48 educational course of sufficient duration that includes coursework and field experience to  
49 support development of the key competencies and knowledge required of interpreters in schools;  
50 and (3) create a publicly accessible mechanism to identify tier-3 interpreters for scheduled  
51 specialized meetings.

52 (c) The department shall adopt regulations necessary to administer a system for training,  
53 assessing, and determining qualifications of interpreters in school settings to improve access for  
54 LEP parents. Said regulations shall be consistent with the recommendations of the School

55 Interpreters Task Force, as authorized by section 81 of chapter 154 of the acts of 2018, and shall  
56 include, but not be limited to:

57 (1) a process for assessing the language proficiency of interpreters seeking to interpret in  
58 school settings, including required levels of competency necessary to obtain tier-2 and tier-3  
59 interpreting status, with grandfathering allowed for school employees whose primary job  
60 responsibility has been to serve as an interpreter for one or more years;

61 (2) required hours of supervised field experience for tier-3 interpreters; and

62 (3) procedures for implementation of the publicly accessible mechanism created pursuant  
63 to subsection 1 of this section to identify and secure tier-3 interpreters for scheduled specialized  
64 meetings.

65 SECTION 2. This act shall take effect upon its passage; provided, however, that the  
66 department may administer a phased implementation of the provisions of subsection (b) of this  
67 act to a diverse number of school districts, subject to appropriation, and provided further that  
68 final implementation of all sections of this act shall take effect statewide when certified as  
69 appropriate by the commissioner of elementary and secondary education in a report to the  
70 general court.