

# PRESS RELEASE



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## **State Affirms \$1 million Commitment from Holyoke Public Schools for Middle School Buildings Project**

Holyoke Public Schools and the City of Holyoke have received written affirmation from Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) Commissioner Jeffrey Riley approving the district's plan to commit \$1 million annually to the City, to help lower the taxpayer burden for the proposed middle school buildings. The [letter](#) describes the available funding mechanisms by which the City can legally accept the \$1 million commitment from HPS without affecting the net school spending requirements required by the state. The Commissioner also states that his approval is, "contingent upon the issuance of debt for the middle schools project."

The \$1 million annual commitment from HPS aligns with [estimates put forth by City Hall on September 18th](#) of 68 cents per \$1,000 residential valuation -- \$129.60 per year for up to 30 years for the average home value of \$190,637.

In order for the middle schools project to move forward, voters will need to approve a "debt exclusion override" on Election Day, Tuesday, November 5th. The override approval is Question 1 on the back of the November 5th ballot. A majority "YES" vote would send the project to City Council where a vote would be taken to officially approve the project and issue the debt. A majority "NO" vote would end the multi-year planning process and cause the City to lose the \$75.8 million contribution from the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA), as well as the \$1 million annual commitment from Holyoke Public Schools.

"We greatly appreciate the contribution that Holyoke residents would make to the two new middle schools and believe it's important for the school department to make this significant \$1 million annual investment as well. I am thankful that our teams at the City and HPS were able to figure out how HPS can contribute to the City," shared Dr. Stephen Zrike, Superintendent/Receiver.

"I want to thank Commissioner Riley and his team at DESE for reaffirming Holyoke Public Schools' funding commitment to the middle schools building project. This project has been a partnership from the very beginning; between city hall, the State, HPS, and most importantly, Holyoke community members. As Mayor, I will continue to do everything in my power to make this project affordable and impactful for our city and students."

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For more information on the proposed Middle Schools Project and for copies of all project-related files, individuals can visit <https://www.hps.holyoke.ma.us/turnaround/msredesign/> and are encouraged to submit any questions related to the project to: [MSredesign@hps.holyoke.ma.us](mailto:MSredesign@hps.holyoke.ma.us).