



**HENRY SANTANA**  
BOSTON CITY COUNCILOR AT-LARGE

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**March 7, 2025**

**The Honorable Michelle Wu**

Mayor of Boston  
Boston City Hall  
Boston, MA 02201

**Superintendent Mary Skipper**

Boston Public Schools  
2300 Washington Street  
Roxbury, MA 02119

**Boston School Committee**

% Lena Parvex, Executive Secretary  
2300 Washington Street  
Roxbury, MA 02119

**RE: Second call for urgent action to sustain the BPS Parent Mentor Program operated by St. Stephen's Youth Programs**

Dear Mayor Wu, Superintendent Skipper, and Honorable Members of the Boston School Committee:

As a Dominican immigrant who grew up in Boston and attended schools like the Blackstone Elementary School and the Tobin School, I know firsthand the power of having caring adults and bilingual education inside our classrooms. This support structure made me feel welcome, safe, and capable – not just of learning, but of thriving in both English and Spanish. Today, as an At-Large City Councilor representing all of Boston, I am committed to ensuring that every child in Boston has access to that same kind of support.

That is why I am writing to you for a second time to further respectfully urge you to prioritize and sustain funding for the St. Stephen's Youth Programs' Parent Mentor Program in the Boston Public Schools' FY26 budget. This is not just another initiative – it is a lifeline for students and families, a program that embodies the values of community, opportunity, and empowerment that shaped my own journey.

The proposed FY26 budget removes critical funding and puts this program at dire risk.

I am not alone in this pursuit. I stand alongside not only the 800 students this program serves, the 40 Parent Mentors it employs, and our BPS families pressing for the continuation of this impactful program – but also my City Council colleagues, who voted unanimously on February 26th in support of a legislative resolution calling for prioritizing funding for the Parent Mentor Program. I was proud to be Lead Sponsor, with Councilor Flynn and Council President Louijeune joining as Original Co-Sponsors, along with every member of the Council stepping up to add their name and vote in support.

I respectfully ask you to listen to the united and unwavering voices of our students, families, and City Council, and ensure full funding to sustain the Parent Mentor Program.

Since 2017, the Parent Mentor Program has built meaningful connections between families and schools, bringing in dedicated Parent Mentors to work alongside teachers and provide thousands of hours of classroom support each year. These mentors are not outsiders; they are parents and caregivers from our own communities, people who reflect the backgrounds and experiences of our students. They serve as role models, language interpreters, and cultural bridges, ensuring that no child feels stranded or lost – just as I once relied on the guidance of bilingual educators who helped me navigate my early years in Boston.

Beyond benefiting students, the Parent Mentor Program also uplifts families by providing economic mobility and professional development. Nearly 40% of Parent Mentors transition into school-based careers, gaining skills, credentials, and opportunities that would otherwise be out of reach. This program is an investment not just in education, but in workforce development and family stability – two goals we must prioritize as a city.

But this program cannot continue without a firm commitment from BPS leadership.

With the expiration of ESSER funds, we cannot allow schools to shoulder this financial burden alone. We need a dedicated budget line item of at least \$476,000 to maintain and expand this initiative so that more students in more neighborhoods can benefit.

I am living proof that having engaged, supportive adults in our schools makes all the difference. I would not be where I am today without the kind of care, mentorship, and bilingual education that programs like the Parent Mentor Program provide.

Now, we have a chance to ensure that the next generation of Boston students receives that same support. If we are serious about educational equity and student success, then we must make this investment now.

Please do not hesitate to reach out if I can be of any assistance in making this a reality.

Sincerely,

*Henry A. Santana*

**Henry Santana**

Boston City Councilor At-Large  
Chair, Committee on Education