



**AARON VEGA**  
STATE REPRESENTATIVE  
5th HAMPDEN DISTRICT

*The Commonwealth of Massachusetts*

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STATE HOUSE, ROOM 146  
TEL. (617) 722-2011  
Aaron.Vega@MAhouse.gov

August 24, 20016  
Marianne Larned  
Stone Soup Leadership Institute  
P.O. Box 4551  
Vineyard Haven, MA 02568

Dear Ms. Larned,

We are grateful for the Institute's support for our Holyoke youth. We struggle to get the programs that our community needs. With the Governor's recent budget cuts, it's been especially challenging. Your support right now for our young people is very timely.

I'm glad Holyoke Mayor Morse requested J'Anthony join the Holyoke Youth Commission. Dr. Zrike, our Superintendent/Receiver asked him to join us on our Holyoke Walks to inspire students to return to school.

The Institute's new chapter: Sustainable Holyoke Youth Leadership Initiative fills an important need. J'Anthony Smith's photo essays are a testament to the Institute's impact. Like most Holyoke youth, J'Anthony had never been to our state capitol of Boston. We're pleased he will inspire Guidance Counselor Anna Rigali's students for your College Field Trip to visit Boston area colleges.

We're excited that Holyoke has been chosen to be a prototype for the Institute's Leadership Platform. Your model of blending motivational speakers followed up with regular online workshops will be a great asset. We're especially pleased with your seasoned youth leaders from Puerto Rico. Our youth are hungry for Puerto Rican role models who've overcome similar challenges to realize their dreams.

I've offered to host the Institute's monthly TedX talks and invite non-profit organizations to fill the 800 seats at the Holyoke High School Auditorium. We're excited the Institute's Puerto Rican leader Will Morales, Boston's Commissioner of Youth & Family Services will kick off this series as soon as next month. We look forward to welcoming your entrepreneurs from Puerto Rico too.

We appreciate the Institute's approach to collaborating with existing organizations. I will invite them to join. We will invite the Holyoke Community College's Gill Technology Center to live stream them and then feature on our local cable TV station. We hope this will inspire our youth as well as their parents and our community to take initiative in their lives.

We extend a warm welcome from the Holyoke community.  
We look forward to working together with you for many years to come.  
Sincerely,

Aaron Vega  
State Representative  
Fifth Hampden District  
413-650-2727