

In the Year Two Thousand and Sixteen

Upon the recommendation of Councilor Dennis Bidwell, Council President William Dwight, and Mayor David Narkewicz

R-16.147
A Resolution

Opposing Lifting the Cap on Commonwealth Charter Schools

WHEREAS, free public schools available to all students regardless of income, ability, need or English language proficiency are foundational to our democracy; and

WHEREAS, all of our students deserve high-quality public schools that teach the whole child, providing enrichment and addressing social and emotional needs in addition to core academic subjects; and

WHEREAS, local accountability for our public schools is necessary to ensure that schools are responsive to the needs of their communities; and

WHEREAS, in FY2017 Northampton is projected to lose \$2,279,216, net of reimbursements, to six nearby Commonwealth charter schools, and public school districts across the state are losing more than \$408 million this year alone — a loss of funds that is undermining the ability of districts to provide all students with the educational services to which they are entitled; and

WHEREAS, Commonwealth charter schools are often approved over the objections of a majority of community residents and their elected officials and are not accountable to local elected officials once they are approved; and

WHEREAS, Commonwealth charter schools often fail to serve the same proportion of special needs students, low-income students and English language learners as the districts from which they receive students and often use high suspension rates to drive out students they don't want to serve; and

WHEREAS, the Commonwealth charter school system is creating separate and unequal opportunities for success; and

WHEREAS, lifting the cap on charter schools would greatly worsen the problems listed above and lead the Commonwealth further in the direction of a costly, unequitable and divisive two-track school system; and

WHEREAS, on June 9, 2016 the Northampton School Committee unanimously approved a resolution opposing lifting the cap on Commonwealth charter schools; and

WHEREAS, a broad range of organizations including the New England Chapter of the NAACP, Jobs With Justice, Massachusetts AFL-CIO, Citizens for Public Schools, Massachusetts Teachers Association, American Federation of Teachers Massachusetts, and Northampton Save Our Schools are all in opposition to lifting the cap on charter schools;

WHEREAS, the NAACP, at its national convention earlier this month, passed a Resolution calling for a national moratorium on the creation of any more charter schools;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Northampton City Council, and Mayor David Narkewicz, opposes lifting the cap on Commonwealth charter schools; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Northampton’s representatives in the State Legislature are encouraged to redouble their efforts to achieve fundamental reforms leading to more equitable and expanded funding of the Commonwealth’s public schools.

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BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Administrative Assistant to the City Council shall cause a copy of this resolution to be sent to Governor Charles Baker, Senate President Stanley Rosenberg, State Representative Peter Kocot, and Secretary of Education Jim Peysler.

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