



## City of Northampton

MASSACHUSETTS

### *In the Year Two Thousand Twenty-Four*

Upon the Recommendation of Councilor Jeremy Macomber-Dubs, Councilor Marianne LaBarge, and Councilor Quaverly Rothenberg

### **R-24.145 A RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF MASS PROMISE TO INVEST: EQUITABLE PUBLIC SCHOOL FUNDING FOR EVERY CHILD**

*Be it resolved by the City Council of the City of Northampton in City Council assembled, as follows:*

**WHEREAS**, \$3 million is the amount for school choice and charter schools that has been annually deducted from Northampton's state school aid as of FY '24.

**WHEREAS**, this resolution addresses school funding inequity in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and its effect on Northampton specifically, it joins similar petitions in many other impacted communities in the Commonwealth.

**WHEREAS**, this resolution is to ask the Commonwealth of Massachusetts to change the way that school choice tuition is funded, by underwriting the municipal cost of sending tuition for low- and moderate-income cities and towns.

**WHEREAS**, Northampton has lost millions of state aid dollars in inequitable Chapter 70 funding.

**WHEREAS**, in 2002 Northampton's Chapter 70 aid amount was \$8 million dollars, that amount remains static. In 2023, Northampton's allocation of Chapter 70 funding hovered just below \$8 million despite enormous changes in inflation, and a twenty-year growth in district facility, insurance, transportation and personnel costs.

**WHEREAS**, even as the Commonwealth has made sweeping changes to Chapter 70 funding calculations, they have acknowledged that education costs are rising much faster than inflation or the 2 1/2 % that is the allowable legal increase in local property taxation. For many years including 2022 and 2023, the state has dictated a need for Northampton to increase its local contribution to school funding by 5% or more, even as Northampton's increase in chapter 70 funding for those same years is barely over 2%.

**WHEREAS**, under Massachusetts' current funding system, for each student who leaves their public school district for a charter school, almost all of the City's per capita public school funding follows the student to the charter school including the percentage Northampton provides its public schools above what the Commonwealth legally allocates. For each student that leaves the Northampton public school district for another public school district, a smaller, but significant, portion of public funding follows each student to their school choice district.

**WHEREAS**, the current system costs public schools much more in tuition payments than it saves them by educating fewer students. Because students "choice out" from different

classrooms, grades and schools across a public school district, the costs to operate the public school district remain relatively unchanged, making it difficult for districts to proportionally shrink spending in response to declining enrollment. Many of the costs associated with running a school district do not "scale down" and are fixed costs including maintenance, utilities, transportation and benefits negotiated in good faith for public employees.

**WHEREAS**, this results in local budgets that are challenged to maintain services and frequently lead to staffing cuts. These cuts, further perpetuate a downward spiral caused by loss of students to charter schools and wealthier school districts and a continued decline in school funding, loss of programming and increased demand for support staff and services as personalized student needs go unmet in larger classrooms with fewer staff, and engaging electives, arts, music, sports, theater decrease.

**WHEREAS**, this decline in local public-school funding most disproportionately impacts our most vulnerable and marginalized students, the Commonwealth has a constitutional obligation to provide an education for all of its children in every city and town through the public schools. Yet, the current funding system siphons valuable and necessary public funding disproportionately from low- and moderate-income public schools.

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**, that the Northampton City Council calls upon the Commonwealth of Massachusetts to correct this inequity by taking long overdue financial responsibility for Charter School and School Choice assessments for low- and moderate-income school districts. We are asking for the Commonwealth to increase state aid to the Northampton Public School District by \$3 million annually by changing the funding formula for school choice tuition and charter school tuition.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the Northampton City Council requests our local and state officials to actively support this policy change, and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the Administrative Assistant to the City Council of Northampton shall send a copy of this resolution to State Representative Lindsay Sabadosa, State Senator Joanne Comerford, Northampton Mayor Gina-Louise Sciarra, the Daily Hampshire Gazette and other media outlets including Northampton City social media.

References:

[DLS Data Analysis and Resources Bureau Program Cherry Sheet 2024](#)

[Education Law Center: Making the Grade 2023: How Fair is School Funding in Your State?](#)

[Berkshire Eagle Massachusetts Must Reconsider the Cost of School Choice 6/24](#)

[MTA on Charter Schools](#)

[New Bedford Mayor, Jon Mitchell: The Charter School Funding is Broken- and Wreaking Havoc With Local Finances](#)

