

Regional School Committee Resolution calling for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts to Underwrite Charter School Tuition and School Choice

WHEREAS, \$2 million is the amount for school choice and charter schools that has been deducted from the Amherst-Pelham Regional School District state aid in the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2024.

WHEREAS this resolution addresses school funding inequity in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and its effect on the Amherst-Pelham Regional School District, it joins similar petitions in other affected communities in the Commonwealth.

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

WHEREAS under Massachusetts' current funding system, for each student residing in the towns of Amherst, Leverett, Pelham, or Shutesbury, who chooses to attend a charter school, almost all of the funding from the towns for that student follows them to the charter school.

WHEREAS under Massachusetts' current funding system, for each student residing in the towns of Amherst, Leverett, Pelham, or Shutesbury, who chooses to attend another public school district, a smaller, but significant portion of the public funding from the towns for that student follows them to the chosen school district.

WHEREAS the current funding system costs public school districts much more than it saves them by educating fewer students.

WHEREAS when a student leaves a school, the costs to operate that school remains relatively unchanged, making it difficult to proportionally decrease expenses in response to reductions in enrollment.

WHEREAS many of the costs associated with running a school district are fixed costs including maintenance, utilities, transportation, and benefits negotiated in good faith for public employees.

WHEREAS this results in a downward spiral of budget cuts that perpetuates the loss of students to charter schools and wealthier school districts, and a continued decline in school funding, loss of programming, and support staff.

WHEREAS the Commonwealth of Massachusetts is obligated by its Constitution to provide a public education to all of its children, rich and poor, in every city and town.

WHEREAS the current funding system siphons valuable and necessary public funding disproportionately from low-income and moderate-income school districts.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Amherst-Pelham Regional School District 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-income and moderate-income school districts. We are asking for the Commonwealth to increase state aid to the Amherst-Pelham Regional School District by changing the funding formula for school choice tuition and charter school tuition and not deducting any funds from state aid for public schools for school choice and charter schools.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Amherst-Pelham Regional School District requests our local and state elected and appointed officials to actively support this policy change, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the chair of the Amherst-Pelham Regional School District or her designee shall send a copy of this resolution to State Representative Mindy Domb, State Representative Natalie Blais, State Representative Aaron Saunders, State Senator Joanne Comerford, the Chairs of the Selectboards of the Towns of Leverett, Pelham, and Shutesbury, the Chair of the Amherst Town Council, the Town Administrators of the Towns of Leverett, Pelham, and Shutesbury, the Amherst Town Manager, and the Massachusetts Association of School Committees.

Unanimously voted and approved on November 12 2024 by the Amherst-Pelham Regional School Committee