



Newburyport School Committee
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The Honorable Senator Steven Baddour
The Honorable Senator Robert Antonioni
Education Committee, Chair
The Honorable Senator Edward Augustus
The Honorable Senator Pamela Resor
The Honorable Senator Karen Spilka
The Honorable Senator Dianne Wilkerson
The Honorable Senator Scott Brown

The Honorable Rep. Michael Costello
The Honorable Rep. Patricia Haddad
Education Committee, Chair
The Honorable Rep. Geraldine Creedon
The Honorable Rep. Alice K Wolf
The Honorable Rep. Alice Peisch
The Honorable Rep. Martha Walz
The Honorable Rep. Robert Rice
The Honorable Rep. Rosemary Sandlin
The Honorable Rep. Carlo Basile
The Honorable Rep. Jeffrey Perry
The Honorable Rep. Richard Ross

April 29, 2008

Dear Senator Baddour, Representative Costello, and members of the Joint Committee on Education:

Our public schools are suffering! Demands on Newburyport's public schools and expectations for improved educational services for all children have never been higher, resulting in years of considerable strain on our school budget. Even with legally allowable increases in local taxes, Newburyport, like other cities and towns across the Commonwealth cannot "close the gap" between the costs for basic quality educational services, and its ability to pay.

The State is an essential piece in the solution for closing the education budget gap. Our City has done its part to maintain our cost of education including enormous gains in both structural and operational efficiency, as well as tremendous sacrifices impacting the quality of education in our district. We continue to explore all options.

Specifically, the teachers, parents, administrators, and concerned citizens of Newburyport, Massachusetts call on our legislators to make the following changes immediately:

Special Education Policy

- 1) Reduce the special education circuit breaker threshold from four times foundation to three times foundation for in-district spending and increase state support for expenses above this threshold from the current reimbursement rate of 75% to 100%;
- 2) Include transportation for special education in the Circuit Breaker reimbursement program

Choice Tuition Reimbursement Policy

- 3) Increase choice tuition from its current \$5000 per student (a rate it has held since the inception of school reform over twenty years ago) to the levels the State has deemed appropriate for charter schools (sending school per student cost).

And for consideration in the FY2010 budget negotiations:

- 4) Set a minimum floor of \$3,000 per child in Chapter 70 aid to ensure equity for districts across the Commonwealth; and,
- 5) Increase funding for the School Building Authority so more districts can benefit more quickly.

In addition, we support legislative actions to find additional funds by way of, but not limited to, reducing the cost of state government or raising state income taxes.

And finally, we call on our state legislators to create new legislation for Chapter 70 and Special Education funding which provides a long-term solution that is equitable for all Massachusetts cities and towns, and formulated on what is in the best interest of our children.

Respectfully submitted,
The Newburyport School Committee



Mayor John Moak
Chair



Gordon Bechtel
Vice- Chair

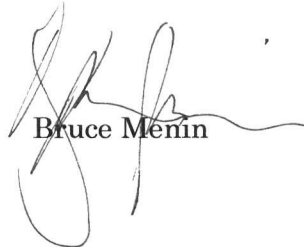
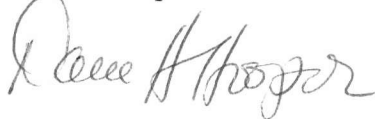


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