



JOINT RESOLUTION: HOLD HARMLESS AID IS ESSENTIAL AND EQUITABLE

- TO:** Governor Charlie Baker
Secretary of the Massachusetts Treasury, Deborah B. Goldberg
Board of the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE)
Commissioner of Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education,
Jeffrey C. Riley
Commissioner of the Massachusetts Department of Revenue, Geoffrey E. Snyder
Senior Deputy Commissioner of the Division of Local Services (DLS) Massachusetts
Department of Revenue, Sean Cronin
- CC:** Senate President Karen E. Spilka
Speaker Robert A. DeLeo
Senator Joanne Comerford
Representative Mindy Domb
Representative Natalie Blais

WHEREAS, the legislature passed the Student Opportunity Act to equalize education funding; and

WHEREAS, ~~some~~ Advocacy groups seeking to implement the Act quickly propose to eliminate the “Hold Harmless” provision of the current law that prevents the reduction of Chapter 70 state aid to any city, town or regional district from the amount of aid from the previous year; and

WHEREAS, Amherst, Pelham and Amherst-Pelham Regional Schools and the Amherst Select Board originally supported the Student Opportunity Act, but w with the implementation elimination of ~~this measure~~ the Hold Harmless provision, we would lose more than \$8M or approximately 14% of our combined budgets, which we cannot support ~~without Hold Harmless aid~~; and

WHEREAS, such a loss would have a negative impact on the equitable access to and quality of education in our communities, resulting in a dramatic reduction to services, including but not limited to:

- A significant reduction of staffing levels, with corresponding class size increases at all grade levels
- Severe cuts to elective programs, specials, and extracurricular activities

- Major reductions to Special Education, English Language Learner, and Title I / Intervention services for our most vulnerable students with the highest needs; and

WHEREAS, this loss would have a devastating ripple effect throughout our communities, as the decrease in public school quality would decrease property values, thereby reducing our ability to fund our schools through property taxes (the rates for which already approach the \$25 per thousand cap in all member towns), which in turn would drive down property values further in an unrecoverable cycle; and

WHEREAS, many public school districts like ours have experienced declining enrollment due to many factors, but still have annual inflation of fixed-costs, and therefore have higher costs per student and less ability to benefit from the economy of scale that's assumed in the Foundation budget calculations; and

WHEREAS, Amherst is higher than the State average for educating diverse students; economically disadvantaged students; high need students; English language learners, and students with disabilities; all of whose educational opportunity will be affected; and

WHEREAS, smaller and more rural public schools like ours rely heavily on this aid in part because we are disproportionately impacted by the state's repeated failure to fully fund the "subject to appropriation" mandates of Regional School Transportation, Charter Reimbursement, Circuit Breaker, and Homeless Student Transportation; therefore, let it be

RESOLVED that we the undersigned ask DESE and DLS in the strongest possible terms to preserve Hold Harmless aid; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Clerk of the Amherst Town Council shall cause a copy of this resolution to be sent to Massachusetts Governor Charles Baker; Secretary of the Massachusetts Treasury, Deborah B. Goldberg; members of the Board of the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE); Commissioner of Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, Jeffrey C. Riley; Commissioner of the Massachusetts Department of Revenue, Geoffrey E. Snyder; Senior Deputy Commissioner of the Division of Local Services (DLS), Massachusetts Department of Revenue, Sean Cronin. And to the following members of the Massachusetts General Court: Massachusetts President of the Senate Karen E. Spilka; Massachusetts Speaker of the House of Representatives Robert A. DeLeo; State Senator Joanne N. Comerford; State Representative Mindy Domb; and State Representative Natalie Blais.

Losing Hold Harmless would have a profound negative impact on the quality and equity of our public schools. [HOLD HARMLESS AID IS ESSENTIAL AND EQUITABLE.](#)

HOLD HARMLESS AID IS ESSENTIAL AND EQUITABLE.

Voted this _____ day of October 2020.

Lynn Griesemer,
Town Council President

Voted this _____ day of October 2020.

Allison McDonald
Amherst School Committee Chair

Voted this _____ day of October 2020.

Allison McDonald
Amherst-Pelham Regional School
Committee Chair

Voted this _____ day of October 2020.

Sarah Hall
Pelham School Committee Chair