

Hinsdale School Board  
P.O. Box 27  
Hinsdale, NH 03451

January 9, 2019

**To: Governor Christopher T. Sununu, State Senator Jay Kahn, State Representatives Michael D. Abbott, Paul S. Berch, Cathryn A. Harvey, and Lucy M. Weber**

We the members of the Hinsdale School Board, Hinsdale School District Administration, Hinsdale Board of Selectmen, Hinsdale Budget Committee, and taxpayers of Hinsdale, respectfully request that you make "public education funding fairness" a priority during the current legislative session.

**There are many compelling reasons to support public education.**

92% of all NH children are educated in our public schools. An adequate education, as defined by ED 306, is fundamental and foundational to the success of individuals and society. Article 83 of the NH Constitution asserts that "knowledge and learning are essential to the preservation of a free government." As community leaders, working adults and business owners, we understand the essential role of public education in our ability to compete in the global economy, where an educated workforce is critical to our local and state economic vitality and future prosperity. Strong, supported, well-funded, public school systems can attract businesses, skilled workers, and families who chose to move to New Hampshire from other areas of the country. Additionally, well-funded and equitable public school settings consistently create communities that are vibrant and contribute to the greater economy of our towns, state and country.

**What is the problem with New Hampshire's education funding system?**

New Hampshire is in an education funding crisis, with the state having cut support to local school districts in average 50% during the last five years, despite increased administrative and legal requirements from the state and federal governments. Article 83, 28-a expressly states that "the state shall not mandate or assign any new, expanded, or modified programs....in such a way as to necessitate additional local expenditures...unless such programs or responsibilities are fully funded by the state..." yet, this is exactly what has happened. Additionally, the state has continued to down-shift costs to local communities without any increase in adequacy funding and consistent decreases in other types of educational funding. Add to this the ever-increasing costs of healthcare, contracts, and facilities, and the funding gap has widened to crisis proportions across New Hampshire, with local property taxpayers unfairly bearing the burden and screaming for relief.

Taxpayers aren't the only ones affected as increased costs have forced local school districts to make budget and program cuts. As a result, a growing number of New Hampshire's children no

longer have access to the basic education required for college admission. Workforce readiness is impacted negatively when high schools cut back programs that would prepare students to enter the job market with the required skills, which further impacts a business' ability to successfully hire and retain local employees. Without well-funded public schools, and the resulting potential workforce, businesses are being forced to leave New Hampshire no matter how favorable the business tax picture. This is even more of a concern for Hinsdale due to our close proximity to Massachusetts and Vermont.

The average cost of educating a child in New Hampshire is \$15,000 per year. The state provides funding for most students at \$3,636 per year. Approximately, \$1,750 is added for special education students, and \$750 is provided for students who qualify for free/reduced lunch. Adequacy aid is a complicated calculation further confused by the towns sending the state a "tax" that is then redistributed to the districts. And while the state does not currently provide funding for private schools or home-schooled students, proponents of SB193 are committed to resurrecting this issue in the upcoming legislative session, draining additional funds from the public schools that are already underfunded. The passage of a similar bill could create a situation where parents are provided an incentive to move their children from public to private education, thus creating more stress on the public school system. We are in a spiral that will only get worse, unless we act.

**Who is responsible to solve this problem? We are, together.**

Our School Board and Administration are addressing what we can and working to find ways to reduce the tax burden; however, in the past decade the legislature has managed to significantly reduce funding to Hinsdale. First, by cutting the entire 40% of funding required by law for public employee retirement, representing an additional cost of over \$800,000 each year to Hinsdale taxpayers for both the town and school district (the 40% state contribution had been in place for more than 50 years); then Concord charged local taxpayers even more by increasing local property taxes and calling it "statewide education tax." There is zero equalization among towns so this tax is "statewide" in name only. Additionally, the state most recently added to our local property tax bill by cutting the Hinsdale Stabilization revenue by about \$200,000 over the past two years.

The New Hampshire Constitution Article 83 clearly outlines the State's role in providing public education:

"Knowledge and learning, generally diffused through a community, being essential to the preservation of a free government; and spreading the opportunities and advantage of education through the various parts of the country, being highly conducive to promote this end; it shall be the duty of the legislators and magistrates, in all future periods of this government, to cherish the interest of literature and the sciences, and all seminaries and public schools..."



The constitution also provides for the State's responsibility to allocate sufficient funds to do so, by establishing that the New Hampshire State Lottery System would provide state aid for education. (Article 83, 6-b)

**We need our state leaders to address this issue now.**


We are asking the State to be a full partner and pay its fair and legal share. We are asking our state legislators to address this inequity and to bring fairness to the funding model as provides for a rebalance of investment in public education in two ways:

- a. Provide for a fair sharing of costs between the state and local school districts, reinstating cuts made over the last five years.
- b. Provide for a substantially increased investment per student in our public schools and revisit the disparity between funding for private and public school districts. Article 83: "...no money raised by taxation shall ever be granted or applied for the use of the schools or institution of any religious sect or denomination."

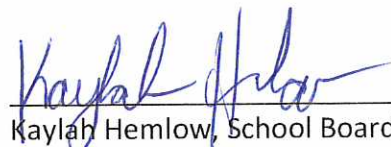
New Hampshire succeeds when our children succeed. We must act now and act together to strengthen our public education system and bring fairness to New Hampshire's education funding structure. **We thank you in advance for your consideration and partnership.**

Respectfully,

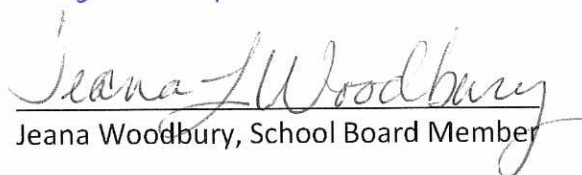
Members of the Hinsdale School Board, Hinsdale School District Administration, Hinsdale Board of Selectmen, Hinsdale Budget Committee and taxpayers of Hinsdale:

  
Holly Kennedy, School Board Chair

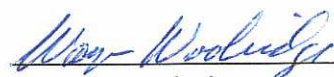
  
Sean Leary, School Board Vice-Chair

  
Kaylah Hemlow, School Board Member

  
Jim O'Malley, School Board Member

  
Jeana Woodbury, School Board Member

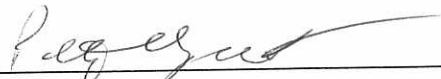
  
Ann Diorio, School District Clerk

  
Wayne Woolridge, Superintendent

  
Mike Darcy, Board of Selectmen Chair

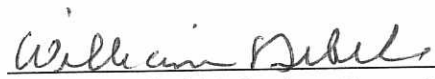
  
Michael McCosker, Board of Selectmen Vice-Chair

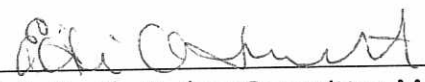
  
Wayne Gallagher, Board of Selectmen Member

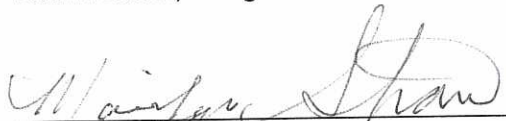
  
Peter Zavorotny, Budget Committee Chair

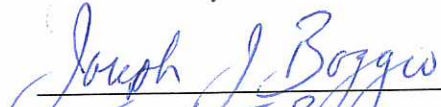
  
Lindsey Blake, Budget Committee Member

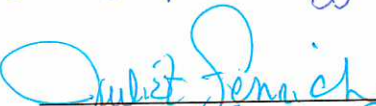
  
Karen Johnson, Budget Committee Member


  
William Nebelski, Budget Committee Member

  
Edwin Smith, Budget Committee Member


  
Marilyn Strom

  
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Juliet Fenrich Spec Ed Director

  
Steve Diorio, Board of Selectmen Member

  
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Joseph Conroy, Budget Committee Member

  
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Thomas H. Renning

  
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