

Dear Member:

Hope all is well. Thanks for passing along the Waltham School Committee's resolution from Wednesday night. I greatly appreciate the School Committee's commitment to the Waltham Public School system and share their desire to give WPS the financial resources it needs to provide the highest quality education to our city's diverse student population.

You'd be happy to hear that I am an original co-sponsor of Rep. Roger's bill, HD4532 - *An Act Strengthening Public Education in the Commonwealth*. As you know, this legislation would implement the Foundation Budget Review Commission's [findings](#). I supported the creation of the Foundation Budget Review Commission in the FY15 state budget a couple of years ago and am advocating for the House to pass HD4532 this session. Under this legislation, the most recent statistics show that Waltham's Foundation Budget would increase by \$2m, triggering an immediate infusion of \$540,272 from the state into Waltham's Chapter 70 local aid award.

HD4532 is a very important piece of legislation, but it is not the only education funding proposal I have been supporting. Here are some other bills and budget initiatives I have been advocating for this year which would benefit Waltham Public Schools:

- Co-sponsored H.472 - *An Act expanding the special education reimbursement program*
This legislation would allow transportation costs to be factored into the Special Education Circuit Breaker. Waltham would see an increase in Circuit Breaker aid under the bill.
- Co-signed bi-partisan letter to state budget leaders calling for an increase in minimum aid from the current level of \$20 per pupil up to \$50 per pupil for the upcoming fiscal year. On a statewide basis, the request would add about \$20 million to the entire Chapter 70 line item, \$106,311 of which would go to Waltham if the \$50 per pupil target is met.
- Co-sponsored the following bills seeking to unburden school districts from excessive, unfunded mandates:
 - o H.456 - *An Act establishing an educational mandate task force*
Bill establishes an 11 member education mandate task force to review existing state mandates placed on public schools and districts. Task Force is charged with developing recommendations to streamline, consolidate, or eliminate outdated or duplicative mandates.
 - o H.376 - *An Act concerning unfunded education mandates*
Creates a task force, similar to H.456, but also establishes a moratorium on all new mandated education programs until the Task Force completes its recommendations.
 - o H.3391/S.322 - *An Act related to unfunded mandates on public schools*
This bill would require the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) to conduct an analysis of all new state laws, regulations, or administrative directives to assess their impact on school districts.
- Testified against H.3928, *An Act to allow fair access to public charter schools*, at the Public Education hearing on Monday, March 7, 2016. This initiative petition would allow the authorization of up to 12 new charter schools every year. Charter schools divert funding from public schools. Raising the cap will drain limited financial resources public schools desperately need.
- Sponsored H.493, *An Act relative to charter schools*. This legislation would require local approval for proposed charter schools.

- Over the past several years, I have led the effort to create a new line item in the state budget to reimburse municipalities for homeless student transportation costs related to the federal McKinney-Vento Act. Although this funding has only been partially funded due to budget cuts, I have continued to push for full funding and made DESE's FY17 McKinney-Vento estimate of \$24,312,389 one of my FY17 budget priorities.
- I also made increased state aid to school districts serving non-Gateway Communities with high populations of English Language Learners another of my FY17 budget priorities. The Waltham Public School system has experienced a dramatic increase in the enrollment of ELL students over the past several years (60% since 2011-12). Waltham High School, in particular, has seen a nearly 100% increase in ELL students since 2011. As you know, many of these students arrive at school with little to no formal education for WHS to build upon. WHS has very little time to close the learning gap, requiring costly staff-intensive interventions with support staff to meet this challenge. Overall, this remarkable influx of ELL students has put a severe strain on the school system's resources.
 - o I urged the House Ways and Means Committee to include the Foundation Budget Review Commission recommendations regarding ELL students into the House FY17 budget proposal.
 - o Funding is not only needed for operational expenses to educate ELL students but for capital expenditures as well. Therefore, I requested an outside section in the FY17 budget to include increased enrollment of ELL students as a viable option for submitting a Statement-of-Interest (SOI) to the Massachusetts School Building Authority. Many school districts in the Metro-West area, Waltham included, are facing unique and significant population increases and don't have the proper facilities to provide the highest-possible education to these students.

Waltham is qualified for and does receive limited funds from the Federal Title III program but that comes nowhere close to covering the cost of educating ELL students. Waltham's income and college achievement levels are above the state requirements for Gateway Communities which are eligible for certain economic development and educational state programs. Despite Waltham educating some of the highest populations of ELL students (percentage-wise) in the Commonwealth, more than many Gateway Communities, the City is unable to apply for these state programs and grants.

- o I filed legislation, H.3220 - *An Act relative to gateway communities* to help raise this issue. The bill allows any municipality who has experienced a sudden increased in ELL enrollment to be eligible for any education programs and funding reserved for Gateway Communities.

I hope this gives you a sense of what measures I have been pushing for on the stateside of things. I keep in close contact with Superintendent Echelson on how I can support Waltham schools. As always, I welcome thoughts and suggestions. Please don't hesitate to let me know if the School Committee sees any bills or budget proposals that you think I should be supporting.

All the best,
Tom