

**NEW HAMPSHIRE PUBLIC SCHOOLS
SCHOOL ADMINISTRATIVE UNIT #1**

**CONTOOCCOOK VALLEY SCHOOL DISTRICT
OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS
106 Hancock Road, Peterborough, NH, 03458-1197**

September 20, 2018

To: Governor Sununu, NH State Senators, NH State Representatives, and all candidates running for public office in the November 2018 election.

We the members of the ConVal School Board and all Select Board members of the nine towns that make up the ConVal school district, respectfully request that you make “public education funding fairness” a front-burner issue in the upcoming election season.

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 choose 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 NH’s education funding system?

New Hampshire is in an education funding crisis, with the state having cut support to local school districts on average 50% during the last five years, despite increased administrative and legal requirements from the state and federal government. Article 83, 28-a expressly states that “the state shall not mandate or assign any new, expanded, or modified programs or responsibilities... 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

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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.

But taxpayers aren't the only ones affected. Increased costs and decreasing enrollment has forced local school districts to make budget and program cuts. As a result, a growing number of NH 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 NH business' ability to successfully hire and retain local employees. Without well-funded strong public schools, and the resulting potential workforce, businesses are being forced to leave NH no matter how favorable the business tax picture.

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 all are, together.

Our School Board and District leadership are addressing what we can: repurposing buildings, creating public-private partnerships for educational opportunities, renegotiating contracts and re-evaluating staffing levels and program offerings. Our town leaders are working in partnership with our school boards to find ways to reduce the tax burden.

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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 advantages 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 NH State lottery system would provide state aid for education. (Article 83, 6-b)

We need our state leaders and candidates for office in November to move this issue to the front burner now.

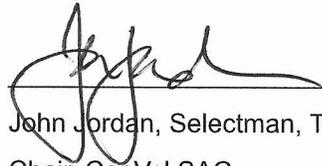
We are asking the State to be a full partner and pay its fair and legal share. We are asking our state leaders to address this inequity and to bring fairness to the funding model as provides for a rebalance of investment in public education in two ways:

- 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 students. Article 83: "...no money raised by taxation shall ever be granted or applied for the use of the schools or institutions of any religious sect or denomination."

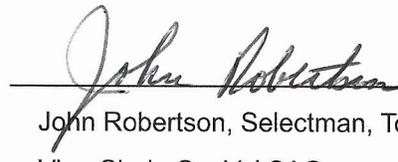
New Hampshire succeeds when our children succeed. We must act now and act together to strengthen our public education system and bring fairness to New Hampshire's education funding structure. **We thank you in advance for your consideration and partnership.**

Respectfully,

Members of the ConVal Selectman's Advisory Committee to the Board of Education, authorized signers on behalf of our respective town Select Boards:



John Jordan, Selectman, Town of Hancock
Chair, ConVal SAC



John Robertson, Selectman, Town of Antrim
Vice-Chair, ConVal SAC



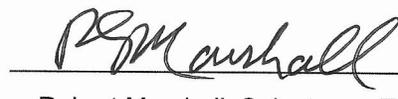
Carl Newton, Selectman, Town of Sharon
Member



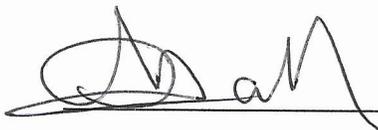
Gail Cromwell, Selectman, Town of Temple
Member



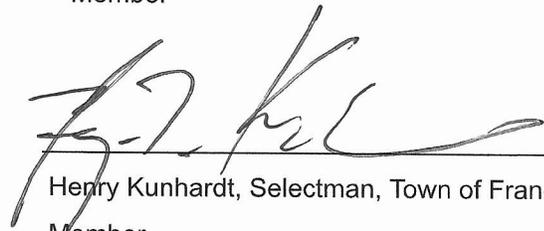
Karen Hatcher, Selectman, Town of Peterborough
Member



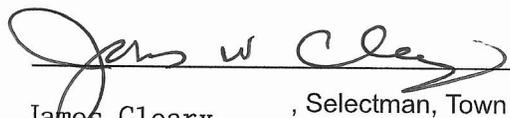
Robert Marshall, Selectman, Town of Greenfield
Member



Dale Gabel, Selectman, Town of Dublin
Member



Henry Kunhardt, Selectman, Town of Frankestown
Member

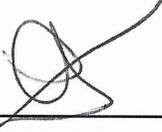


James Cleary, Selectman, Town of Bennington
Member

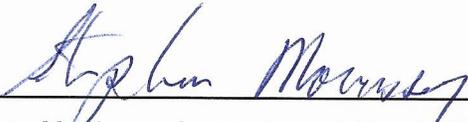
ConVal School Board Members



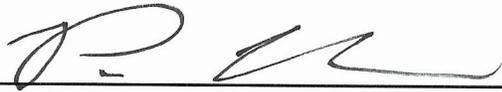
Rich Cahoon, ConVal School Board Vice-Chair
Antrim



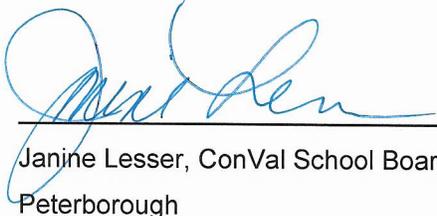
Linda Quintanilha, ConVal School Board Member
Bennington



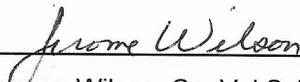
Stephan Morrissey, ConVal School Board Member
Francestown



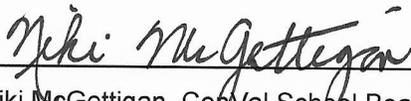
Pierce Rigrod, ConVal School Board Member
Hancock



Janine Lesser, ConVal School Board Member
Peterborough



Jerome Wilson, ConVal School Board Member
Peterborough



Niki McGettigan, ConVal School Board Member
Temple



Crista Salamy, ConVal School Board Member
Antrim



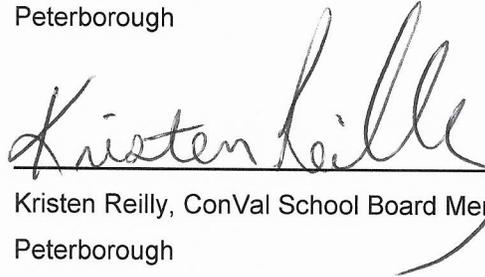
Bernd Foecking, ConVal School Board Member
Dublin



Myron Steere, ConVal School Board Chairman
Greenfield



Richard Dunning, ConVal School Board Member
Peterborough



Kristen Reilly, ConVal School Board Member
Peterborough



James Fredrickson, ConVal School Board Member
Sharon