

# CITY OF NORTHAMPTON

## MASSACHUSETTS

**In the City Council, March 21, 2019**

**Upon the Recommendation of Councilor Gina-Louise Sciarra, Councilor Dennis Bidwell and Councilor James Nash**

**R-19.031 A Resolution in Support of Increased Funding for Massachusetts Public Schools through the Act *Providing Rightful Opportunities and Meaningful Investment for Successful and Equitable Education* (PROMISE S.238, H.586)**

**WHEREAS**, John Adams wrote in the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts that

Wisdom, and knowledge, as well as virtue, diffused generally among the body of the people, being necessary for the preservation of their rights and liberties; and as these depend on spreading the opportunities and advantages of education in the various parts of the country, and among the different orders of the people, it shall be the duty of legislatures and magistrates, in all future periods of this commonwealth, to cherish the interests of literature and the sciences, and all seminaries of them; especially the university at Cambridge, public schools and grammar schools in the towns;...

thereby establishing that free public schools available to all students without exception are foundational to our democracy and are constitutionally-required; and

**WHEREAS**, all of our students, no matter where they live, deserve high-quality public schools that teach the whole child and provide them with a well-rounded school experience that addresses their academic, social and emotional needs; and

**WHEREAS**, the state's foundation budget formula, which determines state aid to each district, has been woefully out of date for years, thereby underfunding our school districts by more than \$1 billion a year for essential educational services, according to the Foundation Budget Review Commission; and

**WHEREAS**, the *PROMISE Act* would phase in an updated foundation budget formula, which according to the Massachusetts Teachers Association would bring the Northampton Public Schools an estimated \$827,675 in additional state aid over five years; and

**WHEREAS**, the *PROMISE Act* addresses the 2015 recommendations of the Foundation Budget Review Commission, which would have a direct impact on Northampton Public Schools. These recommendations include addressing actual district health care costs; providing adequate funding to support English-language learners and low-income students; accurately accounting for special education enrollment and costs; and for districts like Northampton that suffer losses of sending tuition to charter schools, increasing aid to offset the state's failing to fully fund the statutory reimbursement formula; and

**WHEREAS**, once fully implemented, the *PROMISE Act* includes a guaranteed annual minimum state aid per pupil increase of \$50; and

**WHEREAS**, the Legislature failed to pass any foundation budget legislation in the last session, leaving districts, educators and students without the funds necessary to support the schools our students deserve; but

**WHEREAS**, this session the Massachusetts Senate and House leadership agreed to fast-track deliberation on education funding and the Joint Committee on Education will hold its first hearing on Friday, March 22, 2019.

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**, that the Northampton City Council encourages residents to deliver testimony as to the deleterious effects of the current broken public school funding formula, either directly at the State House on March 22, or in writing; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the Northampton City Council urges the Legislature to approve the *PROMISE Act* at the earliest time this spring, create a timeline for its implementation and ensure the needed funds are fully appropriated annually; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the Administrative Assistant to the City Council shall cause a copy of this resolution to be sent to the sponsors of the *PROMISE Act*, State Senator Sonia Chang-Díaz, State Representative Aaron Vega and State Representative Mary Keefe; Chairs of the Joint Committee on Education, State Senator Jason Lewis and State Representative Alice Hanlon Peisch; State Representative Lindsay Sabadosa; State Senator Jo Comerford; House Speaker Robert DeLeo; Senate President Karen Spilka and Governor Charles Baker.