

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-19.032 Resolution in Support of the Act *Committing to Higher Education the Resources to Insure a Strong and Healthy Public Higher Education System* (CHERISH S.741, H.1214)

WHEREAS, public education that is available to all students from pre-kindergarten through higher education is foundational to our democracy; and

WHEREAS, all of our students, no matter where they live or study, deserve access to an affordable public college or university; and

WHEREAS, the Higher Education Finance Commission's 2014 report found that when inflation is taken into account, the Commonwealth's per-student funding for public higher education has declined by one-third since 2001; and

WHEREAS, according to the New England Board of Higher Education, Massachusetts' public higher education costs are the fastest rising in the nation, exceeding the maximum Pell Grant and increasing the gap that low-moderate income students need to make up with other loans or by burdening their families with debt; and

WHEREAS, the Massachusetts Budget and Policy Center found that in 2004 Massachusetts public university students graduated with some of the lowest debt in the country, but by 2016 that had flipped to the country's tenth highest debt at a little over \$30,000 a year, impoverishing students and families and preventing many from completing their degree programs; and

WHEREAS, according to the National Center for Education Statistics' Baccalaureate & Beyond longitudinal survey, the vast majority of students who attend our public colleges and universities live and work in Massachusetts after they graduate, contributing their knowledge and skills to our economy and our communities; and

WHEREAS, the Higher Education Finance Commission found in 2014 that our public colleges and universities are underfunded by more than \$500 million a year; and

WHEREAS, faculty and staff in community colleges, state universities and the University of Massachusetts system are experiencing the elimination of programs, service cuts, and increased use of part-time faculty and staff.

THEREFORE, be it resolved that the Northampton City Council urges the Legislature to approve the *CHERISH Act*, filed by Senator Jo Comerford in the Senate and by Representatives Sean Garballey and Paul Mark in the House. This bill would freeze tuition and fees, and over the period of five years restore state per-student spending on public higher education to the inflation-adjusted levels of FY2001, as long as the Legislature appropriates the funds; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Administrative Assistant to the City Council shall cause a copy of this resolution to be sent to State Senator Jo Comerford, State Representative Sean Garballey, State Representative Paul Mark; Chairs of the Joint Committee on Higher Education, State Senator Ann Gobi and State Representative Jeffrey Roy; State Representative Lindsay Sabadosa; House Speaker Robert DeLeo; Senate President Karen Spilka, and Governor Charles Baker.