

THE GENERAL COURT OF MASSACHUSETTS STATE HOUSE, BOSTON 02133-1053

December 12, 2017

His Excellency Charlie Baker Office of the Governor State House, Room 280 Boston, MA 02133

Dear Governor Baker:

We are writing to ask your support for 100% reimbursement of regional school transportation (line item 7035-0006) in Fiscal Year 2019.

As members of the Regional Schools Caucus, we know firsthand the unique financial issues that plague regional schools. The state currently has 58 academic regional school districts, which enroll approximately 107,000 students in over 170 communities. As was detailed in Auditor Suzanne Bump's report in October, state reimbursement for regional school transportation remains a top concern in districts across the Commonwealth. The report goes on to recommend that the Legislature commit to 100% reimbursement, as it represents an important incentive for school districts to regionalize.

Costs associated with transportation in a regional school district represent a significant portion of a district's budget because of the geographical footprint associated with bus routes across numerous communities, often with low population densities. The mandate that regional school districts are required to transport all students to and from their homes places a significant financial burden on school districts, made especially difficult with reimbursement rates fluctuating from year to year. Committing to 100% reimbursement would allow regional school districts to responsibly plan for upcoming school years.

According to estimates from the Department of Early and Secondary Education, the Legislature would need to appropriate \$86 million in FY19 for regional school transportation to reach a 100% reimbursement rate. Although this represents a \$24.5 million increase form FY18, consistently underfunding regional school transportation ultimately leads to additional future costs for the state that could be significantly reduced if we honor the state's commitment to 100% reimbursement.

Thank you for your time and attention to this matter. We appreciate every effort you and your administration have made to invest in our students and we believe this is a crucial next step in supporting the Commonwealth's schools. Please do not hesitate to contact our caucus chairs, Senator Anne Gobi and Representative Kimberly Ferguson, if you have any questions or would like to discuss the matter further.

KIMBERLY FERGUSON

1st Worcester District

State Representative

4th Bristol District

JOSH CUTLER

State Representative

6th Plymouth District

State Representative

4th Berkshire District

SMITTY PIGNATELLI

State Representative, Co-Chair

Sincerely,

ANNE GOBI

State Senator, Co-Chair Hampden, Hampshire Worcester & Middlesex

CAROLYN DYKEMA

State Representative 8th Middlesex District

WILLIAM CROCKER

State Representative 2nd Barnstable District

PETER KOCOT

State Representative 5th Hampshire District

JENNIFER BENSON

State Representative 37th Middlesex District

ADAM HINDS State Senator

State Senator Berkshire, Hampshire, Franklin & Hampden

PATRICIA HADDAD

State Representative 5th Bristol District

DAVID LINSKY

State Representative 5th Middlesex District

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SUSANNAH WHIPPS

State Representative 2nd Franklin District

JÓSEPH McKENNA

State Representative 18th Worcester District

DANIELLE GREGOIRE

State Representative 4th Middlesex District

DONALD BERTHIAUME

State Representative 5th Worcester District

DAVID MURADIAN

State Representative 9th Worcester District

TIMOTHY WHELAN

State Representative 1st Barnstable District

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TODD SMOLA

State Representative 1st Hampden District

SHAWN DOOLEY

State Representative 9th Norfolk District

ANGELO PUPPOLO

State Representative 12th Hampden District

RYAN FATTMAN

State Senator

Worcester & Norfolk

ERIC LESSER

State Senator

1st Hampden & Hampshire

LEONARD MIRRA

State Representative

2nd Essex District

RICHARD ŘOSS

State Senator Norfolk, Bristol & Middlesex

ANGELO D'EMILIA

State Representative 8th Plymouth District STEPHEN KULIK State Representative 1st Franklin District

NICHOLAS BOLDY

State Representative

3rd Hampden District

Harle " Marghter HAROLD NAUGHTON

State Representative

12th Worcester District

State Senator 2nd Worcester

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BRADFORD HILL

State Representative 4th Essex District

CARMINE GENTILE

13th Middlesex District

State Representative

State Representative

10th Worcester District

SOLOMON GOLDSTEIN-ROSE

State Representative

3rd Hampshire District

ŠARAH PEAKE

State Representative

4th Barnstable

BRIAN MURRAY

JAMES KELCOURSE

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PAUL MARK

State Representative 2nd Berkshire District JONATHAN ZLOTNIK

State Representative 2nd Worcester District State Senator

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KEIKO ORRALL

State Representative 12th Bristol District

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