

RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL

No.

WHEREAS, The quality of the education the Providence Public Schools provides to the City's children is often limited by a lack of adequate financial resources; and

WHEREAS, The City of Providence appropriates more than \$5,000 per student in local funds to the School Department; and

WHEREAS, The City's local contribution is among the most generous in the State relative to the City's tax capacity, as measured by the "property tax effort" benchmark developed by the General Assembly at R.I.G.L. §16-7.1-6; and

WHEREAS, 2010 State aid funding formula "state share ratio" (R.I.G.L. §16-7.2-5) calculates that Providence's fair share of "core instruction expense" is approximately 12%, while the State's fair share is 88%, based on the City's relative ability to pay for education programs; and

WHEREAS, Providence's actual share of the entire "local budget" (funded by State and municipal funds) of the Providence School Department is more than 37%; and

WHEREAS, The funding gap is the result of the current formula's restrictive definition of expenditures eligible for State aid, defined as the "core instructional amount" in R.I.G.L. §16-7.2-3; and

WHEREAS, The "core instructional amount" does not include such basic expenses as transportation expense, building maintenance expense and other operating expenses; and

WHEREAS, These expenses are just as necessary to the provision of education as instructional expenses; and

WHEREAS, Despite this basic fact, the City pays for these operational expenses with 100% local funds, rather than a State/local split of 88%/12% as obtains for "core instructional expense", and

WHEREAS, The State provides that teacher pension expense is funded 60% local/40% State, even though that expense is just as fundamental and unavoidable as those characterized as "core instruction expense"; and

WHEREAS, The great majority of funding formulas nationally provide State aid for transportation expense and/or other operating expenses in ways that Rhode Island does not; and

WHEREAS, The Rhode Island funding formula does not provide additional funding for English Language Learners, contrary to the prevailing practice in other states and contrary to a 2007 report by the General Assembly which provided for an additive weight of 0.2; and

WHEREAS, Rhode Island ranks at or near the bottom nationally of the "Nation's Report Card" for the education achievement of Hispanic students and the "achievement gap" between Hispanic and Caucasian students in each category; and

WHEREAS, A 2007 report by the General Assembly called for \$14,317 per pupil in State aid for Providence, in contrast to the 2010 funding formula's level of less than \$9,500 per pupil;

and

WHEREAS, The “money follows the child” feature of the current funding formula reduces the local funds available to the children in the Providence Public Schools by millions of dollars in excess of the savings achieved by delegating to charter schools the responsibility of educating Providence students enrolled in those schools; and

WHEREAS, While marginal adjustments to the funding formula would begin to address these concerns, the current formula’s structural constraints will not provide adequate (or close to adequate) resources to support an education for Providence’s children that meets the requirements of the Basic Education Plan; and

WHEREAS, Rhode Island is one of an undistinguished minority of states that lacks an enforceable right to education under its Constitution.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, That the Providence City Council urges the Governor’s Working Group To Study The Funding Formula to recommend the passage of an enforceable right to education under the Rhode Island Constitution; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Providence City Council urges the Governor’s Working Group To Study The Funding Formula to review the current formula and propose changes that would make it more fair and equitable to disadvantaged children; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Providence City Council urges the Governor’s Working Group To Study The Funding Formula to recommend that the Board of Education act promptly to initiate a thorough and comprehensive study of the funding formula, including but not limited to the areas identified in the Governor’s Executive Order establishing the current working group; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Providence City Council hereby urges its General Assembly delegation to advocate for a Constitutional right to education and a more fair State aid funding formula; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That, upon passage of this Resolution, the Clerk is requested to distribute copies of it to the Providence School Board, the Providence General Assembly delegation, the Rhode Island Board of Education and the Rhode Island Department of Education and the Fair Funding Formula Working Group.