

Re: Urgent Need for Foundation Budget Review Commission/Increased Aid in FY27 Budget

Dear Senators Rodrigues, Comerford & O'Connor and Representatives Michlewitz, Diggs & Smola:

First and foremost, thank you for including language establishing the Foundation Budget Review Commission in the FY27 Senate budget. It is absolutely critical that the Conference Committee retain this language in the final budget.

We must begin addressing the structural flaws in the foundation budget formula now. For the past two years, legislators have heard consistent and overwhelming testimony regarding the funding crisis facing the Commonwealth's current 272 minimum aid districts. At the public budget hearing in March, school leaders, parents, and municipal officials repeatedly described the situation using words such as "collapse," "devastating," and "ruin." Unfortunately, those descriptions are not exaggerated.

While establishing the Commission is essential, it is equally important to provide immediate relief while that work is underway. Many school districts have reached a breaking point and cannot wait years for structural reform while facing severe budget shortfalls today.

We appreciate that both the House and Senate increased minimum aid from the Governor's proposed \$75 per pupil to \$160 per pupil. While a significantly larger investment is needed to prevent further staff and program reductions, any additional increase the Conference Committee can provide would have a direct and meaningful impact on districts struggling under the current formula.

In addition, as you reconcile the House and Senate budgets, we respectfully request that funding be provided at the higher of the two proposed levels for regional school transportation, Special Education Circuit Breaker reimbursements, and Unrestricted General Government Aid.

We respectfully and most urgently request the Conference Committee to retain the Foundation Budget Review Commission language in the FY27 budget and provide the additional funding support outlined above. The urgency of this moment requires action on both immediate relief and long-term reform.

Thank you for your time, consideration, and continued commitment to the students, families, and communities of the Commonwealth.

Respectfully submitted,