March, 2025

The Honorable Aaron Michlewitz, Chair

House Committee on Ways and Means

Massachusetts State House, Room 243

Boston, MA 02133

The Honorable Michael Rodrigues, Chair

Senate Committee on Ways and Means

Massachusetts State House, Room 212

Boston, MA 02133

Re: Urgent Need for Chapter 70 Reform and Increased State Assistance for Groton-Dunstable Schools

Dear Chair Michlewitz and Chair Rodrigues:

As a resident of Groton/Dunstable, I am deeply concerned about the inadequate funding of the Groton Dunstable Regional School District (GDRSD). The Chapter 70 formula’s “hold harmless” and “minimum aid” provisions have failed our district, leaving our towns to bear an increasing financial burden. Over the past 15 years, our Chapter 70 aid has grown by only 0.14% per year, while local assessments have skyrocketed from 57% to 72% of school funding. This is unsustainable for our small communities, where repeated Proposition 2½ overrides have failed, forcing painful budget cuts year after year.

In FY25, GDRSD was forced to reduce its budget by over $2 million, cutting 27 positions, including teachers, counselors, specialists, social workers, and nurses. Class sizes have grown, student services have declined, and staff morale has suffered. On a personal note, this has impacted my family in numerous ways, including INCLUDE PERSONAL ANECDOTE HERE

With an expected 8% increase in school assessments for FY26, the district faces a $2.5 million deficit, and the elimination of an additional 26 positions without local overrides or state intervention. This would be catastrophic for our school, our town, and my family.

I urge the Legislature to:

1. Support the proposed FY24 Fair Share Act surplus funding and the proposed FY26 state budget line-item increases. By providing school districts with additional FY25 funds, superintendents may realize relief in FY 25 that somewhat eases the strain on financial resources for FY26.
2. Reform the Chapter 70 formula to reflect the true cost of education, including inflation and regional school needs.
3. Increase minimum aid to provide equitable funding for all districts.
4. Provide immediate state assistance for districts like GDRSD facing financial crises.
5. Fully fund regional transportation reimbursements, as required by law, to ease pressure on our local budgets.

The students of Groton and Dunstable deserve access to a high-quality education without the uncertainty of annual budget shortfalls. I ask for your leadership in addressing these urgent issues in the FY26 budget.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Groton/Dunstable Resident