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## **COMMISSION SHOWS PATH TOWARD FUNDAMENTAL REFORM**

*The NH School Funding Fairness Project (NHSFFP) issued the following statement at the conclusion of today's meeting of the Commission to Study School Funding:*

Earlier today, the Commission to Study School Funding completed eleven months of deliberation and approved its report to the New Hampshire Legislature and to Governor Chris Sununu. The Commission's report examines a wide range of issues and incorporates, separately, the varying perspectives of its individual members. In the main, the substance of the Commission's work – and, in particular, the research conducted on its behalf by the American Institutes for Research (AIR) – have set a solid foundation on which to build a more fair and more sustainable system for funding New Hampshire's public schools.

Indeed, AIR's research leaves little doubt that the state's current education finance structure should be razed, documenting plainly and succinctly the injustices it perpetuates. Among AIR's key findings, it notes:

*"The state's current system is inequitable from both student and taxpayer perspectives. The districts serving the highest proportion of students who are economically disadvantaged spend less, on average, compared with districts serving the fewest such students. Moreover, the districts with the least property wealth per student impose the highest local education tax rates to be able to fund their children's education."*

Just as importantly, the models devised by AIR show policymakers a clear path toward addressing these problems and attaining fundamental reform. They demonstrate that a new school funding system can both direct resources to students and districts most in need of greater assistance and ensure that every child in the state receives an adequate education, as required under New Hampshire's Constitution. As such, they reveal that claims that these two critical ends cannot be achieved simultaneously are simply incorrect and that attempts to amend our state's foundational document in the name of more targeted aid are wholly unnecessary.

At the same time, the Commission's report includes several ideas that would immediately improve the fairness of school property taxes in the Granite State. The report calls not only for municipalities to remit the full amount of any statewide education property tax to the New Hampshire treasury – a change that would help mitigate existing disparities in school property tax rates – but also for far more robust property tax relief for low- and moderate-income homeowners. New Hampshire's legislature would do well to act upon those ideas as quickly as possible in its upcoming session. More broadly, just as AIR's analyses show how New Hampshire might more equitably distribute funds to schools across the state, so too do they make apparent that those funds can be generated in a more equitable manner through the use of a statewide property tax that relies upon a single, uniform rate.

Finally, no assessment of the Commission to Study School Funding would be complete without commending the efforts of the people that comprised it. Every Granite Stater owes a debt of gratitude to the seventeen members of the Commission, its consultants from AIR, and the staff from the Carsey School of Public Policy that supported them for the countless hours that they devoted, under trying and uncertain circumstances, to the shared endeavor of improving our state's school funding system. Commission members brought a diversity of experiences, concerns, and priorities to their mutual task, but all were unified in their belief about the importance of public education and in their desire to serve the public good. NHSFFP looks forward to continuing to collaborate with each of them in the coming months.

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