



## **PRESS RELEASE: House Passed Budget Takes Steps in Right Direction on School Funding, but Still Far from Meeting Constitutional Obligation**

The state budget as amended and passed by the House of Representatives includes last minute provisions that will assist the school districts with the most need by reinstating most of the targeted aid cut by the Governor and House Finance Committee. However, it still pillages the Education Trust Fund surplus and fails to fulfill the state's constitutional obligation to fund education.

“This budget passed by the House is a mixed bag, but the overwhelming bipartisan support for increasing need-based education funding and restoring fiscal capacity disparity aid shows that legislators understand we cannot simply leave districts with the most need behind,” said Zack Sheehan, NHSFFP Executive Director. “The Governor and the House Finance Committee’s proposals would have caused the districts with the most need in our state, places like Claremont and Berlin, to lose over \$1 Billion in funding in the next ten years. By reimplementing need-based funding, these districts with some of the highest property tax rates, lowest property values, and largest number of students with increased need will at least not be harmed. To be clear, this does not let the legislature off the hook from developing a comprehensive, constitutional school funding solution.”

A floor amendment that would have repealed the so-called Weyler amendment – which will relocate several educational expenses from the Education Trust Fund to the General Fund – failed by only six votes. Without that change, there will be an estimated \$450 million less going into the Education Trust Fund over the next biennium. Another floor amendment that would have increased state school building aid by \$10 million also failed, this one by only five votes.

“The Education Trust Fund currently has a record surplus, but instead of spending that money on one-time education related expenses like increasing school building aid, these funds could now be raided for unrelated state agencies and programs,” Sheehan said.

Unfortunately, this budget brings the state no closer to fulfilling its constitutionally mandated responsibility to fund education. 30 years after the first *Claremont* decision, the state is still downshifting about \$2.3 billion in education expenses annually onto local property tax payers. By continuing to ignore the NH Supreme Courts multiple rulings regarding school funding, the legislature has demonstrated exactly why there are two school funding lawsuits actively being litigated against the state.

“While the changes made on the floor to reinstate fiscal capacity disparity aid and increase the targeting of state education funding to the districts that need it most are positive developments, we still have a long way to go to fulfilling the promise of *Claremont*,” Sheehan said. “Shifting the cost of education from municipalities to the state will lower property taxes for the vast majority of taxpayers in the state. I know there’s bipartisan support for property tax relief, and today showed there’s bipartisan support for more equitable distribution of education funding to help students and taxpayers. I hope the Senate will see both of those facts and pick up the mantle of crafting an equitable school funding solution while they work on the budget.”



\* \* \* \* \*

*The mission of the NHSFFP, a registered 501(c)(3), is to inform the public about the condition of New Hampshire public schools and their funding; to advocate for changes to make the system more equitable for students and taxpayers alike; and, if necessary, to prosecute, manage, control, and/or participate in a lawsuit challenging the constitutionality of the system for funding education in New Hampshire.*

*For all press inquiries, please contact Noah Telerski at [ntelerski@fairfundingnh.org](mailto:ntelerski@fairfundingnh.org)*