

**SOMERVILLE SCHOOL COMMITTEE RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF INCREASED FEDERAL
AND STATE SUPPORT AND STIMULUS FUNDING FOR PUBLIC K-12 EDUCATION**

WHEREAS, the COVID-19 pandemic is a monumental and unprecedented challenge, emerging quickly and demanding an immediate overhaul of the instructional plans and strategies of school systems across the country; and

WHEREAS, the nation's public schools remain committed to delivering high-quality instruction while ensuring the health and safety of our students and staff; and

WHEREAS, from March 16th - May 15th, the employees of the Somerville Public Schools have worked to continue to provide our 5,000 SPS students and families with access to food, shelter, Wi-Fi, and other educational needs. We're distributing an average of 5,000 meals to about 950 families each week (for a total of 30,419 meals). We are also giving away 8,000 lbs. of fresh groceries each Friday to cover families over the weekends and have given out 36,670 donated diapers to more than 500 families; and

WHEREAS, during the COVID-19 pandemic the Somerville Public Schools, has loaned students more than 1,500 devices. We have given 1,210 Chromebooks to grade 3-12 students and 254 Kindle Fire family edition tablets to grade PK-2 students. An estimated 450 families (approximately 15% of all families in our district) do not currently have internet access, nor do they have the financial means to be able to purchase this service. Through a partnership with Comcast we have registered more than 200 families with high speed home internet. Work is ongoing to register all families. We have also purchased 100 mobile hotspots for homeless students or families that are ineligible for Comcast; and

WHEREAS, the Somerville Public Schools and the City of Somerville have maintained payroll for over 1200 full and part-time district employees, providing stability to our community during economic uncertainty; and

WHEREAS, these challenges will persist and likely grow as COVID-19 affects our economy and destabilizes funding for public schools; and

WHEREAS, reputable economists have predicted the end of the nation's economic expansion and forecast a recession that may be deep and long-lasting; and

WHEREAS, any nationwide recession is likely to affect urban areas and their poorest citizens most severely; and

WHEREAS, the numbers of unemployment claims in the nation's big cities are already the highest we have seen since the Great Depression and may only grow; and

WHEREAS, urban public-school systems across the country are already incurring substantial unexpected costs to provide meal services and purchase and deploy digital instructional devices; and

WHEREAS, urban public-school systems are facing difficult decisions about how to allocate dwindling financial resources to sustain high-quality instruction and other essential services for students and families over the next several years; and

WHEREAS, revenue shortfalls will unequivocally result in budget cuts and possible personnel reductions in urban school systems; and

WHEREAS, these budget cuts will be happening at the same time that urban public school systems will be working to address the immense instructional challenge of unfinished learning that many students will face coming out of this school year; and

WHEREAS, the American Recovery and Reinvestment ACT (ARRA) of 2009 provided \$100 billion in education funding with investments in both the education stabilization fund and various federal categorical programs for public schools, such as Title I and the Individuals with Disabilities Act; and

WHEREAS, Congress followed ARRA in 2010 with \$10 billion in additional funding for the Education Jobs Fund to help school districts retain existing employees, recall former employees, and hire new ones; and

WHEREAS, by comparison the recent Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act provides only \$13 billion for education stabilization funding, which is less than half of one percent of the total \$2.2 trillion relief provided in the CARES Act and is far below the investment that the federal government provided in 2009 and 2010 in ARRA and the Education Jobs fund; and

WHEREAS, public education is one of the largest employers of any organization, public or private, in the nation; and

WHEREAS, published economic research has demonstrated a strong connection between a country's GDP growth and its investments in elementary and secondary education; and

WHEREAS, research has repeatedly found a strong causal relationship between levels of schooling and wages that individuals earn over a lifetime; and

WHEREAS, for public schools to thrive and for our students to realize a bright and productive future, the federal government needs to make a substantial new investment in our wellbeing; and

WHEREAS, the Council of the Great City Schools, the National Education Association, the American Federation of Teachers, the National School Boards Association, the American Association of School Administrators, and the National Parent Teachers Association, and others have called for some \$200 billion in relief for the nation's public schools; and

WHEREAS, this level of funding is the minimum needed by the nation's urban public schools to sustain and accelerate their academic achievement trends over the past decade, including gains in reading and math achievement that outpace the national average;

NOW, THEREFORE, be it:

RESOLVED: That the Chairperson and members of the Somerville School Committee join with the Superintendent of Schools in urging the Massachusetts Congressional Delegation, as well as Somerville's State Delegation to advocate for and approve additional federal and state education funding for our nation's public schools; AND FURTHER

RESOLVED: That a copy of this resolution be delivered to the Governor, Attorney General, and the Somerville state and local legislative delegations and otherwise widely distributed.

VOTED: Unanimously
DATE: May 18, 2020
BY THE: Somerville School Committee