

Resolution on Underfunding in State Aid to Schools

WHEREAS, state leaders are currently preparing the fiscal year spending plan for 2017-2018 (FY18) in the form of budget proposals in which school aid amounts will be announced; and

WHEREAS, the School Funding Reform Act of 2008 (SFRA) remains the current law to provide state aid to public school districts; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to the SFRA, the Newton Public Schools have a deficit in state aid of \$4,698,817 for 2016-2017 (FY17) alone; and

WHEREAS, in FY17, the Newton Public Schools and 239 other New Jersey school districts received less than 70% of their uncapped SFRA funding; and

WHEREAS, in FY17, 209 New Jersey school districts received more than 100% of their uncapped SFRA funding, largely through Adjustment Aid that was intended to be phased out years ago; and

WHEREAS, this unfair distribution of state aid has caused the taxpayers of the Town of Newton to pay \$3,810,772 more than their local fair share of property taxes in FY17; and

WHEREAS, despite exhausting reasonable means to raise local revenue, the funding of the Newton Public Schools remains under adequacy by \$488,010, therefore impinging upon the right of students in the Newton Public Schools to the maintenance and support of a thorough and efficient system of free public schools as per New Jersey Constitution, Article VIII, § IV, ¶ 1; and

WHEREAS, past efforts to address underadequacy to districts such as Newton totals only \$16,763,431 statewide, two-tenths of one percent of the total distribution in state aid to schools; and

WHEREAS, the failure to fully fund the SFRA, or to fairly distribute available state aid to schools, or to increase the amount of Underadequacy Aid has denied the students of the Newton Public Schools the resources needed for their educational success; and

WHEREAS, the Newton Board of Education has held regular, public discussions about the ongoing, severe underfunding in state aid to the school district; and

WHEREAS, the Newton Board of Education has forwarded nearly 200 taxpayer letters to state legislators in support of school funding fairness; and

WHEREAS, the Newton Board of Education has informed citizens about the lack of equity in state aid distribution through newsletters, web pages, and social media posts;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Newton Board of Education does appeal to the New Jersey Commissioner of Education and the Governor of the State of New Jersey to put forth a spending plan that fully funds the SFRA; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that if the SFRA cannot be fully funded due to fiscal conditions, that the funds available for state aid to schools be fairly and proportionally divided per the SFRA formula; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that if full redistribution is not possible this year, that sufficient additional monies be allocated to Underadequacy Aid to close the adequacy gap; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that a copy of this resolution be presented to the New Jersey Commissioner of Education, the Governor of the State of New Jersey, and the State Senator and State Assemblypersons from Legislative District 24.