



To: Commission to Study School Funding

Manchester Proud is our City's first ever community-wide movement to build lasting understanding, engagement, and support for Manchester's public schools. Since our founding in 2017, we have held more than 400 meetings, interviews, listening sessions, and planning forums throughout our City. More than 10,000 teachers, parents, students, community leaders, and fellow residents have joined us in the creation of a Plan for the future of our public schools.

Following more than two years of listening to stakeholders and a year of strategic planning, on February 20, 2020, "Our Community's Plan for the Future of Manchester's Schools: Excellence and Equity for all Learners", was resoundingly approved by our Board of School Committee – literally days before the emergence of Covid-19. This Plan, which you can visit on our website, ManchesterProud.org, includes 60 initiatives organized into three over-arching goals: Grow our Learners, Grow our Educators, and Grow our System.

Throughout this remarkable coming together of our community, we have been acutely aware of New Hampshire's history of insufficient and inequitable school funding. We realize that our hopes and dreams, as embodied by our Plan, are dependent upon reliable sources of adequate funding. Manchester is our State's most urban community and arguably our learners are most impacted by the challenges of the 21st Century. The strength of our movement clearly demonstrates our resolve to provide supports and learning opportunities for every student, but we cannot succeed without the State fulfilling its obligation to deliver needed funding.

We implore your Commission to be bold and brave in finding an enduring resolution to the most vital issue facing New Hampshire's communities, the funding of our public schools. We share the outrage with current funding policies expressed in other testimonies, adding the weight of our movement, to demand adequacy and fairness of funding for all schools.

Manchester Proud's work is founded upon and driven by our passionate belief in a few guiding principles. We share them with you, hoping that your Commission and your colleagues who will act upon your recommendations will also find them to be inspiring - compelling:

- Our public schools are **essential community assets**. Whether you are a business owner in need of workforce, a parent wanting the best future for your child, a worker in search of a rewarding career, or a resident wanting to enjoy the greater health and safety of a thriving and educated populace, our schools are tied to the future of **all of us**.
- More than any other institution or organization, **our public schools embody who we are as a people**, with all of our strengths and weaknesses, commonalities and differences. It is because our public schools "**are us**" that they are the obvious and most opportune place to face, invest in, and improve ourselves – **the place to build a future with opportunities for everyone in New Hampshire to be their best selves**.

Thank you for your service and thoughtful consideration,

Manchester Proud

c/o Granite United Way, 22 Concord Street, Manchester NH 03101, Fiscal Agent

