

September 16 Public Comment Period Notes  
Commission to Study School Funding

**Attendees:** Dave Luneau, Jay Kahn. UNH Carsey School: Jordan Hensley, Bruce Mallory, Carrie Portrie, Michele Holt-Shannon. 9 public attendees.

**Welcome:** Bruce Mallory welcomed public commenters, and noted the ability of commenters to connect with the Commission in other ways.

**Liz Kirwan, Manchester NH:** Speaking as an educator, a parent, and parent of Manchester Proud champions council. As a parent, would like to implore the Commission to continue looking at the needs of our urban students. My stepdaughter did not have the opportunity to learn an instrument until 5<sup>th</sup> grade, other parts of the state can start earlier because of greater funding. Luckily my student lives within walking distance of her school, but other students are unable to access transportation to schools in Manchester without paying for bus rides to school. This action disenfranchises marginalized students living farther away from schools. A family has to pay \$8.50/week for a student to go to school, or over \$350 for the semester. That is for one student, but for families with multiple children are facing high burdens. \*there was a period of internet issues, garbled\*. Students come to school, walking 2 miles to school because they can't afford the bus tickets, or don't come to school for a week at time because they don't have money for a bus ticket. Funding system currently is not equitable. As a community participant with Manchester Proud have had the ability to engage with the greater Manchester community but our work is compromised by the lack of ongoing equitable funding from the state. Know that COVID is exacerbating these issues, but it is also heightening awareness of the issues facing our students. Students with greater needs should be funded at a higher level. Thanked Commission for looking for ways for equitable funding, and noted that she will forward her comments in written form as well.

Jay Kahn – have you looked at where Manchester falls in terms of property tax rates, there are two parts: local share and state share. Liz: Manchester Proud is looking at ways to allocate resources within the community to better support schools. General agreement between the two that tax rates in Manchester and spending on students is low. Jay observed that Manchester's low tax rate is in part a function of tax choices made by Manchester. Would like to hear how you think the local community can take on a conversation about its ability/bandwidth to raise more money locally for schools. Discussion of the tax cap and other limitations, current fairly flat funding rate from the state for all students.

**Emily Gula, Hopkinton:** Was looking at the results of the educator survey done by the Commission and the factors that influence public perception. Was also thinking about property rich towns vs property poor towns and that for those that are more wealth, what is in it for them to make a change? IN a sense the status quo works well for them. How do we build a better system with more buy in? People are talking more about schooling now and the purpose of school – is it childcare, learning? Whatever town you're from, there are a lot of citizens having trouble with school and hybrid and online learning. Has the Commission thought about harnessing the conversation happening now to unite people from different towns into the

conversation? Jay asked about Emily's thoughts. She noted that she is an educator – now a lot of the conversation is just about getting students into school. Health is the larger issue but now so many people are talking about school right now. Perhaps in letters to the editor as a way to bring people in. Other family members and grandparents are helping with families, don't know where people are having those conversations how can we extend and fold one conversation into the other?

Jay asked Carrie to discuss the public engagement work the Commission has done and is planning on doing, which Carrie did, highlighting some of the focus groups, student voice activities, and other engagement activities happening. Bruce noted that this is all part of a broader question around the funding of education in the state and the parameters of the Commission's work.

Dave thanked everyone who provided comments and feedback.