



# **Taxpayer Association Focus Group**

## ***Summary for the Commission to Study School Funding***

*Facilitated and compiled by New Hampshire Listens and Carsey School of Public Policy staff for the Commission to Study School Funding to promote further discussion and understanding of community voices.*

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This report summarizes findings from an online small group discussion focused on Taxpayer association perspectives. The conversation occurred on October 1, 2020. The purpose of this summary is to provide a sense of values, beliefs, and concerns about school funding in New Hampshire to help the Commission to Study School Funding gain further insight into local realities and perspectives.

### **Participants Roles in their Communities and at Home**

Among the seven participants in this focus group were homeowners, taxpayer association representative, elected officials business professionals, and parents. They had children with varying school experiences who attended public schools, Catholic schools, charter schools, the Virtual Learning Academy Charter School (VLACS), Montessori schools, and home schooling. Participants were both long-term public servants and leaders with vast knowledge about school funding. Participants were also newer to understanding school funding and wanted to learn more. Three participants specifically represented taxpayer associations. Three participants were currently a local elected leader or running for office. Overall:

- 1 Granite State Taxpayers representative
- 1 Concerned Taxpayers of Manchester representative
- 1 Rational Taxpayers of Hampton representative
- 1 Coalition of NH Taxpayers (via email)
- 2 Residents of Portsmouth, one a school board member
- 1 Resident of Rye and state-level representative from the finance committee (listening in)
- 1 Resident from Nashua running in local election
- 2 Registrants did not attend the session.

### **Summary Themes and Example Points from the Discussion**

The following section outlines points brought forth during the discussion among the seven participants. Additional details and narrative are in the appendix for further review.

#### **School Funding Related to Student Outcomes Needs Clarity**

- Per pupil funding is different from one community to another. It is difficult to tell what the metric is for an adequately taught student across communities.
- A participant skilled in data analysis was especially concerned about misinformation and misunderstanding between understanding achievement and school funding. There's absolutely no correlation between spending and outcomes. The only variable that does correlate strongly is poverty. That is well known and established across the country. The problem is a blanket assumption that funding equals outcomes – funding equals adequacy is demonstrably untrue.
- Looking at what we want outcomes to be is an important piece that's missing when we start the baseline at different places in different parts of our state.

#### **Students' and School Needs go Beyond the Current Direct Costs per Pupil**

- It is a challenge to find good local employees. We need an educated workforce where people can remain here and not have to move to find a job.

- School choice is important. Students should be able to attend schools (charter, private, public) based on their needs – funding per pupil should stay with the student. One size does not fit all. Charter and Catholic schools include many people of color who find these schools better for their children.
- Sports and clubs are among the big-ticket items that get cut but keep students engaged in their learning process. Our formulas other driving factors that affect outcomes (ex. homelessness, home life, other social issues). Our schools are becoming central to providing social services.
- There are significant needs in Manchester that shift by zip code. There are wealthy and poorer areas that have significant differences in need and student outcome.
- We're all part of the state of New Hampshire – instead of saying every kid must get the same amount of money you start taking a look at the needs within the state.
- Manchester spends over ~\$13 million on debt service, ~\$6 million on transportation. Need to more broadly define what needs to be considered in the per pupil rate.
- Why is what any school district spends on teacher salaries, retirement, or health insurance a direct cost, but the costs to replace a roof or bus transport to school is not a direct cost?

### **Accounting for and Transparency of Local Costs as People have Affordability Concerns – Who Pays, Who Can Pay?**

- Local taxpayers need budget and cost transparency. For instance, release the S.P.E.D.I.S. #s to the public like they were meant to be, no bottom line budgets - line items so voters have a choice, and no secret pay-offs to Superintendents.
- Don't really care whether the dollars are going to the football team or the school counselor or the heating and air conditioning. All residents care about is – I can't afford to live here anymore. Older residents are being pushed out of their homes, and potentially their long-time communities because of higher tax bills. What are the protections?
- Taxpayers are concerned about the direction of funding. Hampton taxpayer association is concerned about the budgets especially now with the pandemic. It is necessary to cut costs when the revenue coming into town is much less than before the pandemic.
- Want to see an accounting of everything that goes into educating the child including capital and overhead. A taxpayer association is going to be focused on how much taxpayers are paying.
- More revenue or different revenue sources, are not going to solve this problem.
- Investments in new buildings or increases in local school funding leaves residents concerned.
- Discussion regarding tiered property taxes – other states do this to help with allocation.
- If people are saying let's find a way to tax people from out of town, out of state – they have their second home and should pay more. But there are arguments on both sides.
- The commercial properties (in Hampton) have gone up about half of the residential has, and it was almost biased to be totally unfair to the residential taxpayer.
- It's not about the cost. It's about how we allocate those dollars to our public-school systems.

### **Concerns about the Definitions of Adequacy, Distribution, and Cherish Remain**

- Our Constitution speaks of an adequate education. There needs to be a better definition for today's society. Our state Constitution speaks of proportional and reasonable taxes. It doesn't specify the distribution being proportional and reasonable. There seems to be a misalignment among definitions. The Commission needs to consider this in their recommendations.
- The General Court should put in an amendment with Webster's definition of the word "Cherish" as a way of circumventing the court's definition of "Cherish." This has got to be decided by the people through their elected representatives and not the court.

## Appendix

*NOTE: The numbers and assertions in these statements may be arguable. They are notes taken during the focus groups and comments recorded in writing to help the Commission inform their decisions as well as hear and understand local perspectives. Overall, these notes and findings serve as a means to help enhance discussion during the process of studying school funding.*

### Questions Framing the Discussion

The meeting was held online via Zoom. The participants received the focus group questions prior to the meeting and the questions were placed in the chat log. Not all questions were specifically posed during the discussion, but each was addressed during the focus as conversation unfolded.

- Introduce yourself. Where you are calling in from, and what role(s) you represent (ex. taxpayer, parent, property owner, grandparent, home owner, business owner etc.)
- Say a little bit about your familiarity with how public school funding works in NH and what brought you hear today.
- How does the current system for funding public schools work for you? Your family? Community?
- In your opinion, what is currently working in terms of the way we fund public schools in NH?
- In your opinion, what are the problems with the current system?
- What are the most important components of an “adequate” education that should be considered as part of the base formula for calculating the cost of adequacy?
- If education is a right for all the school-aged young people in NH regardless of where they live, how would you solve the dilemma of adequate public school funding for every child?
- What do you think are the necessary elements of a public school funding policy that is bi-partisan and able to solicit wide-spread support so school-aged young people in NH can have an equitable opportunity for an adequate public school education?
- How would you describe a student who has had a positive outcome in NH public schools? What components of public schooling supports students’ positive outcomes later in life?
- What questions do you have for the Commission?

### Focus Group Notes

#### Initial Thoughts about School Funding

- Coalition of NH Taxpayers input from the Chairman.
  1. Release the S.P.E.D.I.S. #s to the public like they were meant to be.
  2. No bottom line budgets - line items so voters have a choice.
  3. No secret payoffs to Superintendents.
  4. School choice.
- How can we tell if a student is being adequately taught in NH – thinking about outcomes? Looking across the state, talking with people, what happens in one school is entirely different than another, \$13,000 to \$30,000 per pupil. I can’t tell what the metric is for an adequately taught student in NH across communities.
- Still learning more about school funding – people are struggling with education during the pandemic many parents with kids in charter schools. Are they going to shut them down? Where will my kids go? Parents worried about special education.
- Wanting to hear people’s views. People want a good education for their kids.
- Interested in data analysis, very interested in achievement and funding, especially the misinformation and misunderstanding between the two.

- Very concerned about older residents being pushed out of the community for a high tax bill. Their homes are paid for but the tax bills are high. Finding NH's funding process perplexing and disappointing. Has read the AIR report and sat in on some calls with Chris Dwyer to understand the reports and past formulas. Familiar with donor towns and the history.
- Given the state tax structure, what it looks like and how it plays out – how do we find the revenue necessary? How do we create education to succeed and stay here? It is a challenge to find good employees locally. We need an educated workforce where people can remain here and not have to move to find a job.
- 2/3 of the taxes are on school in SAU 21 (high school) and SAU 90 which is the school system of Hampton. Experiencing reduction in numbers, but also renovated a middle school of 21 million that seems above need based on the number of students. There are many senior citizens who are concerned about the costs. There is extensive investments in new projects on Hampton Beach – by people who do not have students in schools. Rooms and meals taxes are received at a less amount than the full-year residents. There are substantial municipal services for trash clean-up. There is sensitivity to be going back to the concept of a donor town. Concerned about the direction of funding. We believe we have a good education system and teachers. This taxpayer association is concerned about the budgets especially now with the pandemic. It is necessary to cut costs when the revenue coming into town is much less than before the pandemic.

**How does the current system for funding public schools work for you? Your family? Your community? In your opinion, what is currently working in terms of the way we fund public schools in NH? In your opinion, what are the problems with the current system?**

- Communities spend money on things beyond the pupil expenditures. For example, Manchester spends over ~\$13 million on debt service, ~\$6 million on transportation. Need to more broadly define what needs to be considered in the per pupil rate. There are significant needs in Manchester that shift by zip code.
- It makes no sense to have a state funding system that says every kid in the town of Bedford which is one of the wealthiest towns in the state of New Hampshire gets the same amount of funding as every kid in the City of Manchester which is one of the poorest communities in the state. I understand Seacoast concerns about so-called donor towns but you know you can take that donor town argument to the City of Manchester which produces more money in business taxes than any other community in the state by far and doesn't get but a fraction of that back. A lot of communities are going to be donors in some areas. In Manchester I've got zip codes that produce significantly more property tax than other zip codes -- should we limit the spending of those dollars to the zip codes that they come from? We're all part of the state of New Hampshire but I think you address the issues that my friend from the Seacoast brought up -- instead of saying every kid must get the same amount of money you start taking a look at the needs within the state for example Manchester has got several Title I schools and anecdotally those schools literally get ~\$200,000 to \$300,000 more than their peer schools that are not Title I. They have the worst results in the city. If more spending correlated to better results than the Title I schools in Manchester that gets significantly more funding than their non-Title I counterparts would be doing much better than they are. The fact is they're doing much worse. I think we have to question the whole idea that money equals outcomes because it clearly doesn't. Several other [Manchester] schools have a significant poverty population that don't quite meet the threshold. The city is not able to provide them with the same kind of resources at the Title I schools – Instead designate Manchester as a title one district so that the district could take the federal funds that come in to serve children in poverty across the district and provide them uniform resources and approaches. We've got these silos – poor kids at Green Acres Elementary School, we can't help them the same way we try to help kids at Beech Street or Gossler Park or any of the other schools that we have. The way the state is funding education, it is not capable of going to more impoverished communities and providing them with the targeted assistance that they need because it's gotta give the same amount of everything to everybody the only place where there's any differentiation is

where you know you get extra money (ex. 3rd grade reading, ELL, special needs) but it's a fraction of the actual cost. It's a function of everybody's got to get \$3,500 because we don't want to have donor towns.

- I've had kids in private schools, charter schools, public schools and the funding is backwards in terms of the results. It is the non-correlation between spending and results. I've been doing data analysis, and the state Department of Education has a great tool that anybody can use. It takes 10 seconds to go in – find the correlation or lack thereof between lots of different variables that they track. I've looked at every single one of them. I've looked at what correlates – percent of students proficient in math and English – one of the smallest correlations is spending, meaning there is none. It's a 0.1 correlation factor which means it doesn't correlate at all. If you expand outside the state of New Hampshire and look at that at a national level there's a negative correlation, slightly negative correlation – The more you spend the worst outcomes are so if you look at that data there's absolutely no correlation between spending and outcomes. The only variable that does correlate – a very strong correlation is poverty. It's a negative correlation. The more poverty a community has the lower the worst outcomes are going to be. Conversely the more wealthier a community is, the better its outcomes are going to be. That is well known. It's well established across the country. That's true everywhere, not just in New Hampshire. So, a big problem that I have is just a blanket assumption by many people that funding equals outcomes – that funding equals adequacy is just demonstrably untrue. That correlation doesn't exist anywhere in any of the data that I've looked at in terms of funding.
- I live in probably the best Ward in Manchester. I have some of the best schools in the city which is the only reason my kids are in public schools. Despite very negative experiences in some of those schools, I've had some great experiences, and some negative experiences in charter schools so that whole funding model is grossly unfair between the public schools and the public charter schools.
- My mother lives in Manchester, she's one tax increase away from being forced out of her home because of her fixed income. She won't be able to afford the tax payments anymore.
- The formula being used is fairly outdated. I don't think a lot is working. We're looking at numbers that don't really correlate with today's expenses for what it is to adequately educate kids. Do you include transportation or technology? I feel like when I speak of Portsmouth, we're a fairly privileged district but we certainly do have pockets of kids that are vulnerable. When you start at a baseline with any community where you have zip codes that have what they need and other zip codes that don't have what they need -- even with a privileged community like Portsmouth that works very hard to get their kids the technology they need. Right now we have kids that don't have hotspots that we're working on so when you're in a remote learning process – There's not going to be the same level of outcomes to performance. There can't be the same outcomes. One of the problems I have is that we were looking at cost and then we're tying that to outcomes. I think when you're looking at that, especially at a poverty level, there are so many other driving factors that have to be overcome within societies and within communities. Our education system, our formulas don't take any of that into account (ex. homelessness, home life, other social issues). Our schools are becoming more and more a central office for providing all these social services. Teachers are no longer just academic teachers. I think that has to be taken into consideration if our schools are going to be social centers. Or it has to be taken out of the equation and we have to start reinventing our communities again to partner with social services.
- We have to look at school funding as a state. If we're going to set standards at 25% for some districts, 50 for others, and 75 for others, I think we're not looking at what do we want the outcomes to be. I think that's an important piece that we're missing when we start the baseline at different places in different parts of our state.
- I have a very large Ward in Nashua (Ward 2). I'm looking at two separate communities. One community is single family homes ranging anywhere from \$350,000 to \$450,000. In the best school, the students are very well educated and have everything that they need. I have another section of my Ward where it is mostly apartments, paycheck to paycheck living. If I step back and I took a look online with how the distribution for students was calculated – what is the direct cost to educate a student? It doesn't matter



what the maintenance cost of the building is, doesn't matter, putting a new roof of that that should be kept out of the equation...What is the direct cost? That's the only way to measure whether or not you have adequate funding for a student. You can obviously look at the maintenance cost, the energy to heat or cool, the actual building, is it economically sound? That's a completely separate issue.

**What are the most important components of an “adequate” education that should be considered as part of the base formula for calculating the cost of adequacy?**

- Don't really care whether the dollars are going to the football team or the school counselor or the heating and air conditioning. All residents care about is – I can't afford to live here anymore. In Manchester if you just take the school budget divided by the number of students the real number is \$14,600 (versus ~\$13,000), and the number of enrollees keeps changing. That's a significant difference. From a taxpayer advocacy standpoint, taxes are taxes so I would want to see an accounting of everything that goes into educating the child including capital and overhead. A taxpayer association is going to be primarily focused on how much the taxpayers are paying in taxes.
- From a tax perspective, it seems like most of the dollars are coming from basically your base, if you have housing. I think, other than property tax there's probably some pretty interesting ways that we could generate revenue that maybe we should start to consider outside of income taxes. I know a lot of people don't want to have an income tax (examples of alternatives: gas tax, meals and rooms tax that stays local)
- I think it is about the stage light for the taxpayer. We were looking to make significant cuts to our school budget this year. Especially with COVID, social emotional learning is a big piece of school so much so that there's curriculum now developed for social emotional learning. It's not something that is formulated or baked in currently in providing an adequate education. School safety (i.e., physically healthy and safe school buildings) is another real significant piece to adequate education for kids. The current formula is outdated. These areas of funding, as well as sports and clubs were among the big-ticket items that were going to get cut. Parents (in Portsmouth) weren't happy about that, and it's not because we prioritize that over academics by any stretch of the means, but our students really spoke out about how much those components come into keeping them engaged in their learning process and how it does help in their performance. It allows a lot of our vulnerable populations to have places to go after school to be engaged. When we're talking about adequacy, we have to come to better definitions of what that looks like in today's society.
- These (what was mentioned throughout the conversation thus far) are the very things that we discuss in the Finance Committee when working on the budget. A lot of this was a major reason why we wanted to have an actual Commission that was really tasked with doing this and why we put money towards that Commission. It's not unusual for states to examine their funding formula every 10 years -- looking to see if there are better ways – reaching out to other people who are educators and consultants and professionals in the field to try to see what would be best practices. We've talked about other additional revenue streams, but in New Hampshire things go very slowly around those revenue streams. I talked about allowing meals and rooms to keep a little bit more in the community – we haven't been able to get that through the legislature. It's interesting to hear you come up with a lot of the discussions that [the finance committee/legislature] has all the time when we're in session. We're trying to do the budget, so I guess what I can say is that in the Finance Committee were aware of a lot of the things that you're discussing and we're discussing them as best we can as well.
- A participant talked about the discussion regarding tiered property taxes. Noting, I know that's something that other states have done as a way to help with allocation. I am new to the table.
- I hear discussion about it most in Ways and Means where you're looking at revenue coming in. You've got really two different points of view. If people are saying let's find a way to tax people from out of town, out of state. They have their second home. They should pay more. But there are arguments on both sides, and you don't hear as much about that as you hear about no income tax. There's been a huge amount of down shifting in communities over 10 years, and the state has down shifted around \$900 million to communities

across New Hampshire –that is coming into how you're paying taxes. That's on you, and so one of the things the budget tried to do this past year was to create revenue sharing to put money back into communities. COVID has “thrown budgets up into the air in terms of what’s going to be coming in.” Those are some of the things that you hear more about instead of the tier (property tax solution). There is a deduction I believe for senior citizens, but it's not very helpful.

- A note that Senator Guida added to the Commission’s charge a request to consider class A, B, & C properties.
- History of Hampton: we've had several revaluations, and the residential properties have gone up substantially. Those along the water have gone up even more. The commercial properties have gone up about half of what the residential has, and it was almost biased to be totally unfair to the residential taxpayer – shifting the burden to them within our community. We (taxpayer association) made a lot of noise about it to try and get a little more fair or to raise the property values of commercial businesses, which have risen. Also, we hold the school board accountable to watch every penny, and when you have declining enrollments your cost for people is going to rise. It’s just the simple math, and they have a responsibility in trying to provide a wonderful education to all children and respond to all their needs. Hampton has changed from a lot of transients, who used to rent at the beach, to property owners who own. So that type of person is not coming to our community. We have people buying houses, but we also have a lot of fixed income. Rational Taxpayers of Hampton are demanding that the school boards watch every penny they spend and get the best bang for the buck for the student and not waste money and not have unions dominating how the work rules should be versus taking care of the needs of students. It’s an arduous task, one that's very confrontational between our group and the administrators of both SAU 21 and 90. They do hear us and they do, to some degree, pay attention. But if you have a school board that just going to go along a rubber stamp everything that the administration wants, then you're not going to make any real progress. They'll just spend without great regard for who's paying the bill, and it's just an endless task. We feel the taxpayers responsibility to push their buttons on those who are making the decisions to watch every cost and to give the town taxpayers the best bang for the buck.
- How do you protect folks on fixed incomes who maybe have paid off their home long ago? They're living on a very modest means, their Social Security or pension. The tax rate continues to go up -- what are the protections there?
- The question isn't on the amount of money that's raised and spent. It's how it's spent. The idea may be looking at other revenues. Wearing the hat of someone who is chairman of the Finance Committee of the state's largest school district I will tell you that more money, more revenue or different revenue sources, are not going to solve this problem. I will also guarantee you that just about every school district, not just Manchester, based on my experience and as a Reporter that used to cover multiple school districts is that internally how things are done, how resources are marshalled, how priorities are set, how results are measured matter. Most school districts do a pathetic job of, actually assessing what their problems are, then telling people how they're going to solve them, providing them with the benchmarks that will show them whether or not they're going in the right direction.
- Why is what the city spends or any school district spends on teacher retirement or health insurance a direct cost, but what I spend to replace a roof or put a kid on the bus to get to school not a direct cost? I think if we're going to talk about what is an adequate education, I think at some point we need to introduce the concept of the money follows the child into the discussion. I think we need to ask why do charter schools, why do Catholic schools, and why did the vast majority of private schools get significantly better results for significantly less money? What are they doing differently? Why are they so popular? If I have a sort of money follows the child issue or approach, then I have the ability to assess the child and the child's needs, and try to apportion funds generally. Those of you who have been or are on local school boards need to pay attention to this because the more the state provides money the more the state is going to assert its control over what will and won't happen in the schools. I mean we see that now already to a large degree, the way the state handles things. We're going to recommend the Common Core

standards, but we're not going to require you to do it...by the way all the standardized testing will be aligned to the Common Core. If you want to give your kids a better chance at succeeding on the standardized test that have become a Holy Grail of education.

- The Catholic school I send my two kids to, the tuition is \$5,000 a head. I guarantee you what they're getting at that Catholic school is a whole lot different than what they're getting in their public school. The charter schools are even better. I want to make a point on charter schools because this is an area that the Commission really needs to look at because it's manifestly unfair to every school district in the state. But the state requires the local school district (the local education agency) to assess and pay for the special education needs of all the special education kids who are residents of its city, in any charter school. Logistically and financially it is an enormous burden on the local school districts, and since the state is mandating it, there is an argument to be made that the state should be having dollars follow the special Ed student to the charter schools and should work directly with the charter schools to provide the IEP or the 504. Because it's a crushing burden on some school districts including Manchester. A lot of special Ed parents send their kids to charter schools because of their academic program or their environment. It means their children in most cases need much less intervention, and so it's a better environment for them. If they really want to make a meaningful change that would be beneficial to the student and the district and the taxpayer having special ed funding go from the state to the charter school and having the charter schools develop the IEPs in the 504s independent to the local district would be the best thing to do.

#### **Anything else you want the Commission to know?**

- I'm a bit frustrated because this issue has been going on for in excess of 15 years. School funding hasn't been resolved. The adequate education baseline has never been established across the board, and I don't know if it is intentional not to solve it. We've looked at the committee members, very brilliant people – should easily be able to solve this kind of a problem. It's still not done.
- I want to thank everybody for the input. It was extremely valuable information for me to gain some knowledge and understanding what's really going on here and hopefully if I get elected I can get up into the legislature and help solve the problem. I just don't understand this from a business standpoint. I worked in a multi-billion-dollar company. We solve problems every day significantly larger than this across the world. I just don't understand why it's not solved. After 15 or 20 years it should have been done. I heard it mentioned earlier that the formula is outdated, so this needs to get done.
- I want to reiterate and emphasize an earlier point that we've heard tonight (from participants) that again seemed to jump to a conclusion that we need more revenue – How do you know? How do you know we need more revenue? Prove it to me. Once you prove that we need more revenue, how much do we need? What does an adequate education cost? Nobody can ever answer that question. All we ever hear is, well we need more, we need more money. Nobody can ever put a price tag and say – you give me this much money will get the job done. When you don't have accountability, which we don't have in our public schools, is that spending expands to match supply. We see this in Manchester all the time. We're experiencing it right now – a large new teacher contract that hands out a bunch of pay raises and then the next year you have layoffs. The money does not benefit the kids. You don't end up with smaller class sizes. You don't end up with necessarily better teachers. You just end up spending more money for the same product. Incidentally over the last 12 years, Manchester per pupil spending has increased 55%. The schools have not improved by any measurable objective. Closing point: One size does not fit all, and I think if we've learned anything from COVID, it's been that. I would even go further than that to say that you know all central planning does is make everybody equally miserable. If we had a funding formula that followed the child, that empowered families – my family is a perfect example. Four girls, very different educational experiences. I had one who absolutely thrived at Memorial High School did phenomenal and was very successful there, got a good education. Her sister would have circled the train there, never would have been successful. She absolutely thrived at a charter school that we sent her to. My closing appeal would be for flexibility for families to be able to choose what's going to work best for them.



- I am listening to this conversation as well as other conversations. Our constitution speaks of an adequate education and yet there's not a clear definition of what an adequate education is.
- Our state constitution speaks of taxes being proportional and reasonable, but my understanding of what I've read is that there's this argument around the distribution. It doesn't specify the distribution being proportional and reasonable. So, I think we're kind of starting off on some footing around definitions that don't seem to be agreed upon. I think the Commission needs to consider those things and what they're putting together.
- I would challenge comparing private schools to public schools. They are very different beasts. Private schools don't fall under the same state and federal regulations. From having my own children in private school at one point and from attending a private school as a child and then going into public, you really have a lot of uniformity in what private schools sometimes look for in kids and their backgrounds. I don't necessarily think that you have the same challenges that are presented sometimes in a public school that you have in a private school as far as cost. I would use the example of 504 plans and transportation. Right now, in Portsmouth our transportation costs are being driven up by transporting kids (elsewhere outside of district). That's driving up our transportation, but that's not something that you're necessarily going to see as a cost line in a private school. I just would caution the Commission as they are looking at comparing you know different types of schools and school funding. Why I don't disagree that allocation is a huge issue. I think that it's not about what the cost is, it's about how we allocate those dollars our public-school systems.
- If you dig into charter school stats, you will find that they're hardly homogeneous. In the City of Manchester, some of them are majority minority. I know the Catholic schools I sent my kids too are majority minority, heavy immigrant and refugee populations – lot of them with parents who are of lower socioeconomics whether it's charter or Catholic schools who are choosing those schools because they're better for their kids. Sometimes they get outside scholarships in the case of the Catholic schools or there are ways to help them do it. Some simply work extra jobs. I think if you take a look at the demographics in particular of the charter schools, you'll see that it's not so homogeneous.
- I want the Commission to know two things. I think the discussion here and that's been had at the legislature – all of this has come about because in my opinion the Supreme Court did not have the wisdom to say that this is not for us to decide. This is for the elected branch of government. Whatever the Commission comes up with there needs to be something, whether it's an amendment or something else that simply removes the court because until and unless the court is removed from this discussion, we are going to go through lawsuit after lawsuit after lawsuit after lawsuit. This is not a one size fits all situation and whatever community is not well fit by whatever resolution comes up whether it's Hampton because it's a donor town or Claremont because it's not getting enough cash, it is then the courts are going to continue to be the arbiter. It is an issue that requires the elected representatives to hash it out to figure it out and come up with a solution. If that solution doesn't work then they get voted out of office and new people come in. The General Court should put in an amendment before the people of the state of New Hampshire with Webster's definition of the word "Cherish" as a way of circumventing the court's definition of "Cherish." I think if you define Cherish in the constitution other than what the Supreme Court has defined it, then you don't need to get into all these complicated amendments about funding structures or everything else that are bound and determined to fail. This has got to be decided by the people through their elected representatives and not the court.