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Q1: Please enter your first and last name.

First Name

John

Last Name

Ward

Q2: Comment:

Simply put, the first, most important flaw in the funding formula is that the teacher pension contribution is not matched to the share ratio. The fixed ratio of 60/40 local/state overburdens the urban districts and any others with a share ratio above 40%. Correction of this inequity will result in cost burden relief (Providence more than \$13 million) that can be properly applied to smaller class sizes and support services in the neediest school districts. The change will result in a lower aid amount for the wealthier suburban districts, but they currently offer significantly greater class offerings in much smaller class sizes, so this should only move to a more equitable outcome without causing an unmanageable burden for the suburban districts. Senator Picard, at my request, introduced legislation in 2012 and 2013 to make this change, so there should be reasonably current financial impact reports available for your review.

Please keep in mind that the cities of Providence, Pawtucket, Woonsocket, etc. have the highest "tax effort" ratios in the state while having the lowest paid teachers with the highest student/teacher ratios in the state. It is not as if these cities can still be blamed for not raising the local share! Their taxpayers are already overburdened.

Fact is, when the aid formula resulted in significantly less funding to Woonsocket that the city couldn't compensate for fully due to extreme tax burdens otherwise, the school department removed our block scheduling system. When that went, so went the marvelous variety of elective courses being offered to our students. Those electives provided opportunities for students to pursue non-traditional courses of interest to them. Now that we have cut out those classes and moved back to a more traditional 6 period system with limited electives, class sizes have been maximized to the 30 allowed by contract. Check the RIDE data, you will see that Woonsocket HS has a student teacher ration of 24/1, 5 students higher than the net highest high school. When you ask why our graduation rate is declining, you should know that this is the reason. The graduation rate was as high as 64.9% in SY11/12 and by SY13/14 it had fallen to 57.8%. Block scheduling, along with most of the elective classes, was removed during that time.

Another problem with the current funding formula is that the new formula's poverty factor did not consider the unique situation of Providence, Pawtucket, Newport, and Woonsocket. These four communities are the only ones that have Federal Family Public Housing. That Federal Housing only pays a regulated PILOT to their communities. For Woonsocket, the housing authority pays less than \$50,000 of PILOT for the family developments against a full value tax amount of almost \$1 million. The \$950,000 has to be made up by the remaining taxpayers. Prior to 1995, there was a funded categorical aid provided (and currently still in law, though not amended to update it) that paid these four cities some amount to compensate for that loss of tax revenue. The Woonsocket school district has almost 11% of their students who reside in public housing. I don't know what the ratios are in the other cities, but I know that the lack of resource is another factor in contributing to our local problems; and not just financial.

I am hopeful that this commission will be effective in resolving the problems that exist in the funding formula and look forward to hearing of your proposals.

Thank you for your efforts. A generation of students is depending on you.

#EdFundingRI - Public Comment Submission

Q3: By submitting this comment, you understand and acknowledge that your name and your comment will become available to the public as part of the public record.

Yes, I understand that my name along with my comment will be part of the public record and will represent me when shared or posted online.