



TOWN OF EXETER, RI

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April 7, 2026

The Honorable Daniel J. McKee
Governor of the State of Rhode Island
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

Dear Governor McKee,

At their meeting of April 6, 2026, the Exeter Town Council voted to support the Blue Ribbon Commission's report, *Equalizing Opportunity: Creating a Fair and Transparent Funding System for Rhode Island's Public Schools*. This report represents one of the most thorough and forward-looking examinations of our state's education funding system in more than a decade and its findings make clear that Rhode Island has reached a pivotal moment. We now have both the responsibility and the opportunity to modernize how we fund our schools so that every student, no matter their ZIP code, has access to a world-class public education.

The Commission's work highlights both the strengths of our current system and the serious inequities, instability, and inefficiencies that hinder progress for students and communities across our state. The report proposes a coherent, comprehensive, and student-centered framework built on seven guiding principles: sufficiency, student-centeredness, comprehensiveness, predictability, transparency, equity in fiscal burden, and accountability. These principles reflect what educators, families, municipal leaders, and students themselves have long called for, and they provide a clear roadmap toward meaningful and lasting improvement.

The Town Council wishes to emphasize the urgent importance of implementing the Commission's recommendations in full. The report does not merely identify problems, it offers detailed, practical solutions that will bring Rhode Island in line with national best practices while addressing the unique needs of our communities. Key recommendations include:

- Accounting for the full cost of education, by expanding the Core Instruction Amount into a comprehensive Core Education Amount (CEA) that includes transportation, building maintenance, early childhood special education services, and other essential costs currently borne by local districts alone.
- Tailoring funding to student needs through enhanced and more accurate weights for economically disadvantaged students, multilingual learners, students with disabilities, and those enrolled in high-cost CTE programs, ensuring that dollars truly follow students based on instructional need rather than district factors beyond their control.
- Requiring local contributions aligned with each municipality's ability to pay, ensuring shared responsibility and removing long-standing inequities caused by inconsistent local funding and the limitations of maintenance-of-effort provisions.
- Improving fiscal responsibility, reporting, and strategic management so that spending is tied to student outcomes, made transparent to the public, and supported by tiered systems of oversight and technical assistance when needed.

Taken together, these recommendations would establish a funding system that is more simple, fair, predictable, and transparent than the one we rely on today. They would reduce volatility for municipalities, protect districts from sudden cost spikes, and, most importantly, provide students with the resources they need to thrive academically, socially, and emotionally.

The Commission's work is also grounded in extensive stakeholder input, including interviews with more than 45 local and national experts, testimony from subject-matter specialists, and the perspectives of Rhode Island students through the Youth Working Group, who voiced clear priorities around fairness, transparency, and the importance of funding for transportation, social workers, special education, and

multilingual learner supports. Their voices underscore the necessity and urgency of action.

Rhode Island has set ambitious goals for educational excellence. Achieving them requires an education funding system that matches those ambitions—one that is modern, equitable, and aligned to the realities of today's schools and students. The Blue Ribbon Commission has provided a clear and actionable blueprint. We must act now, and not allow implementation over time or multiple years!

The Exeter Town Council urges you to support the implementation of the Commission's recommendations and to champion the creation of a fair, transparent, and comprehensive funding structure that truly serves all Rhode Island students. Our communities, our educators, and, most importantly, our children deserve nothing less.

Thank you for your commitment to strengthening public education in our state.

Sincerely,



Diane Bampton Allen
Town Council President

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Copies to

RI Senate President
RI Speaker of the House
Elaine Morgan, State Senator
Megan Cotter, State Representative
Julie Casimiro, State Representative
David Cicilline & Nora Gordon, Commission Co-chairs, RI Foundation
Exeter-West Greenwich School Committee
Rhode Island City and Town Councils
Exeter Town Council