

## NOTES/FEEDBACK ON DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

### Local Education Aid and Local Share

1. Rhode Island's cities and towns face a challenging fiscal environment. In the last five years, some communities have maintained low levels of investment in public education; this is the same period during which the state has increased its investment by almost \$180M.
2. The Funding Formula maintenance of effort language should be reviewed and strengthened to escalate based on inflation and enrollment increase.
3. Cities, towns, and school committees, and the Rhode Island Department of Education should improve communication over education funding, funding adequacy, and the need for high-quality, reliable multi-year planning.
4. The revisions to the funding formula should clarify the method for calculating local tuition for the purposes of public schools of choice. The method of calculating tuition must be rational, transparent, fair, and well-understood by all.

The method for calculating the local share of education funding is very clear in the funding formula (see RIGL § 16-7.2-5). What is unclear is why, two years into the implementation of the funding formula, RIDE stopped following the formula that is explicitly set forth in the statute and started withholding additional money from the calculation of the local share due to schools of choice and transferring those funds to traditional school districts. This change is contrary to the plain language of the statute, and RIDE never informed charter schools that it planned to, and ultimately did, withhold substantial funds (an average of \$361 per pupil in FY 15) from them. As such, it was/is neither rational, transparent, fair nor well-understood by all.

Going forward, the local share should be calculated in accordance with the plain language of the law.