

Dear Legislators,

We understand that the House Committee on General, Housing and Military Affairs is making decisions this week regarding two bills proposing changes to the process for statewide collective bargaining for public school employees' health benefits.

We are requesting that this letter be entered into the written testimony of the Committee on General, Housing and Military Affairs on H.81 and posted on the Committee's website. Rather than H. 81, we support H.63 because it balances appropriate access to health care benefits and reasonable cost containment to ensure the financial sustainability of the benefits. Cost containment is needed in order to avoid further jeopardizing educational opportunities for students and maintenance of facilities.

Local examples of the importance of cost containment in health care include:

For FY22, we have dedicated \$238,811 to healthcare expenses in our budget, representing 6% of our budget.

Healthcare costs for us are up 30% for FY22, while we are presenting a budget with only one additional increase of an additional teacher. We have kept the rest flat. If this budget fails, additional cuts will need to be made to compensate for these rising costs.

In addition, future cost reductions in other areas will have to occur in order to level fund our budget in the coming years while managing the healthcare increases. This is not sustainable without eventually impacting programming and positions.

The cost of healthcare as a percentage of the average cost of compensation of our teachers is 25%.

Please feel free to contact us with any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

Tara Sweet, Fletcher School Board Chair