

Senator Jason M. Lewis, Chair
Joint Committee on Education
State House, Room 511-B
Boston, MA 02133

Representative Alice Hanlon Peisch, Chair
Joint Committee on Education
State House, Room 473G
Boston, MA 02133

March 22, 2019

Dear Chair Lewis and Chair Peisch:

Good Morning Senator Lewis, Representative Peisch, and members of the Joint Committee on Education. My name is Deborah Gesualdo. I am a music educator in Malden and the president of the Malden Education Association.

I support SB238, filed by Sen. Sonia Chang-Diaz (D-Boston), and HB586, filed by Rep. Aaron Vega (D-Holyoke) and Rep. Mary Keefe (D-Worcester), *An Act providing rightful opportunities and meaningful investment for successful and equitable education*, and I request that it be reported out of committee favorably as soon as possible.

On behalf of more than 6,000 students and 780 educators, I am here to tell you what it is like in the underfunded schools in Malden and why it isn't just necessary to pass SB238 and HB586, THE PROMISE ACT, this spring, but why passing the PROMISE ACT is an urgent matter.

We have a once-in-a-generation chance to correct the outdated and inequitable school funding formula, and the PROMISE Act is the ONLY bill that fulfills every single recommendation of the Foundation Budget Review Commission for an equitable education regardless of one's ZIP code.

For decades, students have come up through our public schools with inadequate funding due to an outdated foundation budget formula that was established in 1993, when I was 12 years old. It is now 2019. I'm 37 years old, and the time for change is now.

Our students in Malden deserve every opportunity, and our educators work wonders daily with our students, even though we are operating on a shoestring budget. But the bottom line is that our students deserve more than they are getting. When I walk through classrooms and schools in our district, here's a snapshot of what I see:

- Outdated and tattered books
- Broken and battered instruments
- Art classes with old supplies, not enough supplies, or no supplies
- Core academic classes at the high school with more than 30 students crammed into a classroom
- School libraries that are not in use because there is only one librarian for five K-8 schools

- Limited access in grades K-8 to fine and performing arts classes, world language classes, and STEM classes and, in some cases, no access to these classes and programs
- Adjustment and guidance counselors with caseloads that are sky-high
- Students who deserve more and get less just because their ZIP code is 02148

The current foundation budget formula punishes students of color and economically disadvantaged students. The foundation budget should provide equity so that ***all*** students have what they need to thrive — ***no matter where they live***.

If the Joint Committee on Education reports out favorably the PROMISE Act and both the House and Senate vote to pass this piece of legislation, here is a sample of what ***will*** happen for our students in Malden:

- Schools will be resourced with more education support professionals in inclusion classes for the support our students need and deserve.
- More adjustment counselors and guidance counselors will be hired so they are available to students who need increased access to them and to help students realize their future potential.
- Our English language learners, students of color, and economically disadvantaged students will not be left behind because their ZIP code is 02148.
- District programs will be made available at all school sites instead of only some schools.
- All students in grades K-8 will have access to robust fine and performing arts programs, world language classes, and STEM classes.
- All of the K-8 schools will have their own librarians instead of having just one librarian for five K-8 schools.

Our students need fully funded schools.

Our students deserve fully funded schools.

The state Legislature owes a social debt to our students in Malden and across the Commonwealth.

I respectfully ask that you report out favorably on the PROMISE Act, SB238/HB586.

The time to fund our future is now.

Thank you,
Deb Gesualdo, President, Malden Teachers Association
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