

Somerville School Committee Resolution in Support of S.2571: An Act Empowering Municipalities and Local Governments

WHEREAS, the Somerville School Committee is committed to providing a high-quality, equitable education for all students while maintaining responsible fiscal oversight of the Somerville Public Schools (SPS) budget; and

WHEREAS, municipalities and school districts across the Commonwealth continue to face significant fiscal pressures due to inflation, rising transportation costs, and the increasing complexity of school facility needs; and

WHEREAS, Governor Maura Healey and Lt. Governor Kim Driscoll have filed **S.2571, the Municipal Empowerment Act**, a legislative package designed to provide local governments with the tools, flexibility, and revenue options needed to modernize operations and strengthen community services; and

WHEREAS, S.2571 includes several provisions of vital importance to the Somerville Public Schools and the City of Somerville, including:

1. **School Project Borrowing:** Extending the maximum bond term for school projects from 30 years to 40 years, allowing the City to better align debt service with the actual life expectancy of modern school buildings;
2. **Transportation Flexibility:** Repealing outdated laws that limit a district's ability to bring school bus services in-house, thereby granting Somerville greater autonomy to pursue more cost-effective and reliable transportation models;
3. **Procurement Reform:** Modernizing Chapter 30B procurement rules to streamline the purchase of supplies and services, and equalizing advertising thresholds to reduce administrative red tape;
4. **Local Revenue Options:** Providing local options to increase the meals tax (from 0.75% to 1%) and lodging tax (from 6% to 7%), which would generate critical non-property tax revenue to support the city's General Fund and, by extension, our schools;
5. **Hybrid Meeting Permanency:** Formally codifying the ability for public bodies to hold remote and hybrid meetings, ensuring continued transparency and accessibility for Somerville families and stakeholders; and

WHEREAS, the proposed legislation also addresses critical workforce challenges and operational efficiencies, such as centralizing utility valuations and simplifying the process for accepting and expending grants;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Somerville School Committee strongly supports the passage of **S.2571, the Municipal Empowerment Act**; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Somerville School Committee urges its delegation in the Massachusetts General Court—including Senator Patricia Jehlen and Representatives Erika Uytterhoeven, Christine Barber, and Mike Connolly—to advocate for the swift passage of this bill; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that a copy of this resolution be sent to Governor Maura Healey, Lt. Governor Kim Driscoll, the Chairs of the Joint Committee on Municipalities and Regional Government, and the leadership of the Massachusetts House and Senate.