

Dear Governor Healy,

We, the Dalton Select Board, are writing to you amidst on-going budget deliberations. Dalton is one of seven small towns comprising the Central Berkshire Regional School District, the largest geographic district, and likely the sparsest student-dense school system in the Commonwealth. Our community provides comprehensive Police, Fire, DPW and government services to its aging, income limited residential population of 6,200 residents. We are a fiscally conservative community. But as a result of increased costs and decreased state aid spanning decades, we are now faced with the stark reality of considering implementing structural reductions to our school and town budgets.

We respectfully request that your office fund Rural Aid to the recommended amount of 60 million dollars for FY27. Educational expenditures in rural districts are roughly 20% greater per pupil given fixed costs and economies scale compared with our non-rural, non-regional counterparts. Rural Aid is fundamental to our school operations, especially in light of rural schools' disadvantage given Chapter 70 formulations. Any proposed shortfall of Rural Aid would prove devastating in providing quality educational services to our students.

Please note that our district has the lowest per pupil expenditure among communities in Berkshire County; and we have been recognized as one of only 13 districts in the Commonwealth to meet or exceed pre-pandemic achievement levels.

Our school district is tasked with providing a certified budget by mid March for voter approval at our Annual Town Meeting in May. Rural Aid allotment will be 5 months hence. Our community's collective responsibility to balance the needs of our town and school budgets pivots upon your voice in support of Rural Aid now.

Quality public schools and equal educational opportunity via equitable public school funding is the bedrock of our Commonwealth's long history. The recommended 60 million dollars of Rural Aid will keep our schools strong. Rural Aid dollars will provide relief for our town's budget, ensuring the continued delivery of public services for which Dalton is known.

Again, thank you for your continued support.

Dalton Select Board

c.
CBRSD School Committee
CBRSD Select Boards
Senator Paul Mark
Representative Leigh Davis