

**From:** John Burnham, Chair, Board of Education, Hampton School District

**Sent:** Friday, March 14, 2014

**To:** Education Committee

**Topic:** Public Hearing Testimony — HB 5565  
An Act Concerning the Minimum Budget Requirement

I would like to thank the committee Chairs, Fleischmann and Stillman, and the entire Education Committee for re-crafting the Minimum Budget Requirement law slightly as set out in House Bill 5565 in order to address an important deficiency in the current law.

Currently, I serve as the Chair of the Board of Education in Hampton. Hampton is a one-school district, PreK-6. The town's 7<sup>th</sup> through 10<sup>th</sup> graders attend the regional high school. As you know, regional districts are separate school districts. So Hampton funds its children's education at the local elementary school district and separately it funds its older students at the regional middle-high school district.

In the current year, FY '14, Hampton's portion of the regional school budget increased sharply. What this meant, and this is the problem with current MBR legislation, is that the elementary school district could go down as much as Hampton's allocation to the regional district increased, and in such a case the town, in the eyes of the state, would still meet its minimum budget requirement.

Because this happened in Hampton, the elementary school district's budget went down in FY '14 5.5% as compared with FY '13. This is a dramatic decrease and several times larger than any other decrease in the state. It led to significant personnel, program, and personnel cuts, which is extremely damaging to the educational program we can deliver. But even more troubling is that this deep cut in our budget, resets the elementary school district's Minimum Budget Requirement 5.5% below what it was, and this gets carried forward in subsequent years. So as costs go up, as they always do, our little district falls further and further behind.

What the proposed legislation does is simple. It does not allow one school district's approved budget increase to lead to a decrease in another district's budget below its approved budget figure from the previous year. This is what the MBR was intended to do, but in the case I just cited, a flaw in the law allowed a district's budget to go down because of another district's increase.

I support this minor revision in the MBR law because it agrees with the general philosophy of the original MBR legislation: to prevent the reduction of a school district's budget except in very specific instances, and then by no more than ½%. And in the long run, this will be beneficial to kids.

Thank you.