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House approves proposal to boost education funding

Bill will help communities address special education, health insurance costs

BOSTON – Representative Todd M. Smola (R-Warren, Ranking Member, Committee on Ways & Means), is backing a proposal to deliver additional education aid to cities and towns to help address rising special education and health insurance costs.

House Bill 4730, An Act relative to findings of the Foundation Budget Review Commission, calls for adjusting the state’s Chapter 70 formula to increase funding for local school districts by approximately \$500 million over a five-year period, beginning in 2019. The bill was approved by the House of Representatives on a unanimous vote of 148-0 on July 11.

A 2015 study by the Foundation Budget Review Commission estimated the state is underfunding public education by as much as \$1-\$2 billion per year. House Bill 4730 seeks to implement some of the Commission’s key recommendations in an attempt to establish a more equitable funding formula moving forward.

“Access to high quality education in our local school districts is essential for the success of our children,” said Representative Smola. “This adjustment to Chapter 70 shows that we take this responsibility seriously.”

In addition to factoring in fixed costs related to special education services and health care benefits for school employees and retirees, House Bill 4730 directs the Department of Education to hire an independent research consultant to provide recommendations by December 31, 2018 on how the Chapter 70 formula can be adjusted to better account for the number of English-language learners and low-income students in each school district.

The bill also requires the state Education Commissioner to create a data advisory commission to streamline school reporting so that resources can be more effectively allocated at the local level. The commission will be responsible for filing an updated report every year by December 1.

The bill now moves to the Senate, which previously approved its own education funding proposal on May 10. For additional information please contact Representative Smola at Todd.Smola@mahouse.gov or (617)722-2100.

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