



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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July 16, 2021

Mayor Kate Snyder
Portland City Council Members
389 Congress Street
Portland, ME 04101

Dear Mayor Snyder and Members of the Portland City Council,

The Portland City Council will be acting soon on recommendations from the Portland Board of Education regarding funds that have been allocated to the City due to the recently passed state supplemental budget. More specifically, the City will receive an estimated additional \$6.2 million in state educational funding (the final number is still being calculated). The Council is authorized to either accept or modify the Board's recommendations.

At this point, the Board is recommending the funds be dedicated for three purposes: to reduce the property tax increase for this year's school budget, to cover maintenance costs, and to address debt service obligations. Over half of the funds would be set aside for debt service.

While I appreciate the recommendations of the Board of Education, I hope the Council will, instead, vote to use a majority of the funds to reduce property taxes in the City.

For over twenty years, there have been repeated efforts to increase the state funding for public education to 55%, and the newly-passed state biennial budget has attained this goal. By achieving this level of funding, it was expected and, at times promised, that municipalities would provide significant property tax relief.

As you know, right now in Portland many residents are struggling with recent revaluations and noticeable property tax increases.

The new state budget increases not only school funding, but also municipal revenue sharing, and provides additional funding for both the Homestead Exemption and the Property Tax Fairness Credit. These efforts will help offset property tax increases, but they should also be augmented by the use of additional school funds for tax relief.

At the very least, a majority of the \$6.2 million should be used to assist Portland taxpayers during a unique and exceedingly difficult time.

Finally, it should be noted the state budget also includes \$45 million for a revolving loan fund for school renovation/repair, and last year the debit limit on school construction was increased by \$25 million dollars. Resources from these initiatives are available to the City for future school construction and repair projects and, hopefully, will minimize debt service obligations.

Thank you for your time and consideration, and I would welcome the opportunity to discuss this issue in more detail if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael Brennan". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "M".

Michael Brennan
State Representative, District 36, part of Portland