

2026-36

TOWN OF MIDDLETOWN

RESOLUTION

IN SUPPORT OF AMENDMENTS TO THE FY2027 STATE BUDGET

TO FULLY FUND CERTAIN EDUCATION COSTS

WHEREAS, the Town of Middletown is committed to providing a high-quality public education system for all students and ensuring that educational services are delivered in an equitable and fiscally responsible manner; and

WHEREAS, Rhode Island municipalities are required to provide certain education services, including high-cost special education and student transportation, pursuant to state and federal law; and

WHEREAS, the current State funding structure does not fully fund these required services, resulting in significant and unpredictable financial burdens on municipalities and local taxpayers; and

WHEREAS, the Rhode Island Foundation's Blue Ribbon Commission report, *Equalizing Opportunity: Creating a Fair and Transparent Funding System for Rhode Island's Public Schools* (December 2025), identified high-cost special education and student transportation as critical areas where the State should assume a greater share of responsibility and provide more comprehensive and equitable funding; and

WHEREAS, the Blue Ribbon Commission further found that the current funding system excludes important educational costs, including transportation and certain special education expenses, and recommended that these costs be incorporated into a more transparent and equitable state funding framework; and

WHEREAS, the Blue Ribbon Commission emphasized the importance of reducing fiscal volatility for municipalities by shifting high-cost and unpredictable expenditures, such as special education and transportation, to the State level; and

WHEREAS, the Governor's FY2027 budget funds only approximately 70% of the State's obligation for high-cost special education and private school transportation, and provides no dedicated funding for homeless student transportation; and

WHEREAS, school districts are required under the federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. §11431 et seq.) to provide transportation to homeless students to and from their school of origin, resulting in additional unbudgeted and unpredictable costs to municipalities; and

WHEREAS, municipalities across Rhode Island are currently required to absorb the remaining costs of these services, placing strain on local budgets and creating inequities among communities with differing fiscal capacity; and

WHEREAS, a targeted amendment to the FY2027 State budget to fully fund these obligations would advance the recommendations of the Blue Ribbon Commission and improve fairness, transparency, and predictability in the State's education funding system;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Middletown Town Council hereby respectfully requests that the Rhode Island General Assembly amend the FY2027 State budget to include the following:

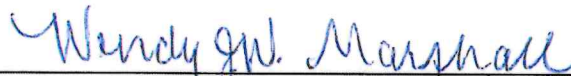
1. Full funding of the State's high-cost special education categorical program, consistent with Rhode Island General Laws §16-7.2-6(a);
2. Full funding of the State's private school transportation categorical program, consistent with Rhode Island General Laws §16-7.2-6(e); and
3. Establishment and funding of a new categorical program to support the cost of transportation for homeless students, consistent with the requirements of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Town Council urges the General Assembly to recognize these expenditures as core educational costs that should be equitably shared at the State level, consistent with the findings and recommendations of the Blue Ribbon Commission; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Town Clerk is hereby directed to transmit a certified copy of this Resolution to the Governor, members of the Rhode Island General Assembly, the Rhode Island League of Cities and Towns, and other interested stakeholders.

APRIL 6, 2026

READ AND PASSED IN COUNCIL



Wendy J. W. Marshall, MMC
Town Clerk