

I am writing to update you on the critical steps we are taking in our budget development process for the upcoming school year. The School Committee and our school leaders are working diligently to finalize a budget that supports the continued progress of all our schools.

## The School Committee's Proposal: A Level Service Budget

At their meeting last night, the School Committee approved a Level Service Budget plan to be presented at the Public Hearing on May 13th. Their decision to vote to move forward a Level Service Budget was a very difficult one for the School Committee. They, our district leadership, and our staff know that our schools really need some key targeted investments to keep our progress going. But considering the City's financial position, the School Committee chose to pursue a prudent and fiscally responsible plan for a Level Service Budget that would still allow all of our schools to maintain the same level of instruction, programs, services, and support for our students as we are providing this year.

## Potential Budget Shortfall and Impact

At the same time, I want the community to know that, due to the City's financial situation and the upcoming budget recommendation from Mayor Lundberg, the possibility of budget cuts is looking more and more likely.

**Mayor's Recommendation:** Mayor Lundberg informed the Committee that on May 5th, he will recommend a \$1.25 million increase for the school budget. This funding level would be \$1.5 million below the School Committee's recommended Level Service Budget, and would force the schools to reduce our budget by \$1.5 million

**Potential Cuts:** Funding this far below level service would result in the school district cutting up to 24 positions across all schools.

**Impact on Students:** If staff reductions of this magnitude become necessary, the impact would be felt deeply across all schools and include:

- Increased class sizes at Gloucester High, O'Maley, and our elementary schools.

- The reduction of elective classes at Gloucester High School

- Reduced support for multi-lingual learners and the staff who support them.

- Cuts to support services for students with disabilities.

- The elimination of kindergarten classes in multiple schools, leading to increased class sizes in the remaining classes.

The budget process is not over. The final funding level from the City is not yet finalized, and School Committee members have vowed to continue advocating for the full Level Service Budget. The severity of any potential budget cuts and how many students are affected depends largely on the final recommendation made by the Mayor and the subsequent approval process by the City Council.

## Next Steps in the Budget Process

Here are the immediate next steps:

- May 5: Mayor Lundberg will present his recommendation for the city and school budget to the City Council.

- May 13: The School Committee will hold its Public Hearing on the School Department budget.

All updates and presentations on the school budget process can be found on our website.

Thank you for your continued engagement and support as we navigate this process.

Sincerely,

Ben Lummis

Superintendent