[Voter NAMES]

[Address]

[Date]

Dear [Rep Name];

We are residents of Berlin, Massachusetts and parents of students at the [Berlin Memorial Elementary School (BMS)] [Tahanto Regional Middle/High School]. Right now, our town is working on the town budget and is facing an unprecedented increase in school budget requests due in large part to the extraordinary increase of mandated special education costs. For the district, that increase is projected for FY24 at 18% above last years cost, pushing our total district budget need to the estimated dollar value for FY24 of $22,785,598. Our town is working hard to meet the school’s needs but we are currently looking at only a 5% increase to meeting the supporting the district’s operating budget. This ultimately leaves more than a million dollar gap that will impact our students and families significantly. To fund our schools at their level-service need, our town’s citizens would need to vote for more than an 9% increase to their property tax. That is just too much to ask of families that are struggling with inflation prices already. Our town has a higher assessed need for special education students. It is this issue that truly drives the district’s budget crisis. The state must step in and help.

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[Change for your family’s personal story.]

***Sample 1:*** Our son NAME is a BMS 2nd grader and a pretty average kid. He makes friends easily and likes school. He also struggles with math and reading and has qualified for support services in both. With those services his testing scores improved dramatically. If a service-level budget is not funded next year, and intervention services are not offered, the gap created in his academic struggle will grow and become more challenging to close as time passes. The school needs the funds to be able to help all students who need these kinds of interventions.

***Sample 2:*** Our daughter NAME is a Tahanto 7th grader. She was offered support services (math, reading support, PT, OT, etc.) in her early school career that has allowed her to be a smart and capable 7th grader. Without the funding in place next year many students will go without the services that will allow them to thrive in the years ahead. The school needs the funds to be able to help all students who need these kinds of interventions.

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Right now the State mandates special education services and has authorized increases in the costs issued by those providers. We are not questioning that mandate, but we are requesting that the State provide additional funding to support those increased special education costs. The towns cannot fund that cost and still meet the learning needs of average kids in our classrooms.

Recently the Massachusetts Association of School Committees voted to support the pursuit of major changes to the Circuit Breaker reimbursement for extraordinary special education expenses. MASC is advocating for a reimbursement rate of 90% of special education related expenses beyond three (3) times the average state per pupil foundation rate. We offer our voices to help elevate this request. That with this additional funding our district and town can meet the needs of ALL of our school children.

We thank you for your consideration of this school funding matter.

Sincerely,

[Your Names & Signature]