

Portsmouth School Committee Resolution
RE: Establishing a Legislative Commission to Study
Student Transportation Needs and System Costs

WHEREAS, § 16-21.1-2. Establishes school bus districts within the state to provide bus transportation in the interest of public safety, health, and welfare for pupils in grades kindergarten through twelve (12) or in special education programs who attend public schools, regional schools, and nonpublic, nonprofit schools which are consolidated, or regionalized, and where said school bus districts originally established in 1977, are not contiguously aligned, resulting in increased transportation costs for many districts, and;

WHEREAS, § 16-21.1-8. Mandates an out-of-district statewide school transportation system and requires a fee be paid to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, thus preventing school districts from exploring more cost-effective ways of providing transportation;

WHEREAS, The legislature enacted the “Statewide Transportation for students who Attend School Outside of Their Residence LEA” to provide fiscal efficiencies for student transportation outside of district. The system, while purportedly offering efficiency, has failed year after year to accomplish this, particularly as it relates to cost. Statewide transportation costs for Portsmouth alone were over \$600,000 in FY 2023. It is not cost effective, nor it is efficient;

WHEREAS, Staffing shortages in the Rhode Island public transit authority have caused students attending the Providence public schools to be absent from or late for school; and

WHEREAS, The new graduation requirements, especially for CTE programs will require additional transportation costs in order for students to obtain experience outside the classroom;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED: That a special joint legislative commission “On Student Transportation Needs and System Costs” be created consisting of eleven (11) members: three (3) of whom shall be members of the House of Representatives, not more than two (2) from the same political party, to be appointed by the Speaker of the House; three (3) of whom shall be members of the Senate, not more than two (2) from the same political party, to be appointed by the President of the Senate; one of whom shall be the Commissioner of Elementary

and Secondary Education, or designee; one of whom shall be the President of the Rhode Island School Association of School Committees, or designee, one of whom shall be the President of the Rhode Island School Superintendents Association, or designee; one of whom shall be the President of the Rhode Island PTA, or designee; one of whom shall be the chair of the board for the Rhode Island Public Transit Authority or designee. In lieu of any appointment of a member of the legislature to a legislative study commission, or any commission created by a General Assembly resolution, the appointing authority may appoint a member of the general public to serve in lieu of a legislator, provided that the majority leader or the minority leader of the political party which is entitled to the appointment consents to the appointment of the member of the general public. The purpose of said commission shall be to determine the transportation needs of students, the most cost-effective way of providing statewide transportation services, whether transportation costs should be incorporated into the education funding formula's core foundation amount, and what changes, if any, need to be made in Rhode Island General Law 16-21.1

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED: This special joint legislative commission shall issue a report to the full House of Representatives and the Senate by December 31, 2024.

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED that the Superintendent of Schools is authorized and directed to transmit duly certified copies of this resolution to policy makers, educators and the community-at-large.

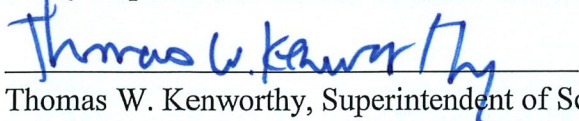
WHERETO: The following bear witness:



Emily Copeland, School Committee Chair



Karen McDaid, School Committee Clerk



Thomas W. Kenworthy, Superintendent of Schools

Passed: 2.15.24