



## CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS MAYOR KATJANA BALLANTYNE

**Date:** May 20, 2025

**To:** City Council

**From:** Mayor Katjana Ballantyne

**RE:** Item 25-0905 - That the city hereby adopts Chapter 329 of the Acts of 1987, An Act Increasing Local Control Over the Annual School Budget.

---

Dear Honorable City Councilors,

As Mayor and CEO of the city, it is my responsibility to make decisions that serve the City as a whole. We live in a time of declining revenue and skyrocketing fixed costs. Further restricting the ability to prepare a responsible, thoughtful, carefully drafted city budget does not strengthen our city and does not serve the residents of Somerville. I cannot, and do not, support the adoption of the Special Act.

### **One City, One Budget**

The school department is one part of our city, and the essential services it provides are supported by multiple departments. Our students, families, and Somerville Public School (SPS) staff rely on the work of City staff in order to get to and from school safely, keep food on the table, access affordable housing, have emergency services available in case of fire or other crisis, maintain our buildings, and much more.

The intent of this legislation is to elevate one city function – albeit it a vital function -- above all others. In practice, this legislation will lead to inefficiencies, instability, and inevitable cuts to other critical city services and programs. The ability to prudently plan, respond nimbly in a crisis, and formulate a **reasonable budget that keeps the city together as a whole** will be eroded.

### **Multi-year Commitment**

I oppose this act precisely because my administration remains committed to Somerville Public Schools, to the educators who shape our next generation, and to every student who deserves a thriving, supportive, and equitable educational experience. At a time when other cities are





making painful cuts, we have a school budget proposal submitted by the School Superintendent with my Administration's support that preserves **every** existing program, **every** existing service, and **every** single SPS staff position. And we're building forward from there.

Over the past three years under my leadership, Somerville has invested more in our public schools than at any other time in our history. This level of growth isn't a one-time surge. It's a long-term commitment. This FY26 budget – and if we manage carefully, all budgets beyond FY26—will carry those gains forward.

Again, we all share the same commitment to our schools and educators, and that strength is how we can navigate forward. That foresight, that partnership, is why we're not scrambling. It's why we can stay the course. And it's why we will continue to meet this moment with discipline, creativity, and fierce dedication.

We are fortunate to be in a community that understands the value of both our schools and our local government. Our current processes ensure both are considered and supported integrally. They've given us strength in easier days, and we must not abandon them in times with greater challenges.

Sincerely,

**Katjana Ballantyne**  
Mayor