MEDFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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To: Medfield School Committee
From: Jeffrey J. Marsden, Superintendent
Re: School Choice Recommendation
Date: May 13, 2024

Under MGL c.76, s.12B, all school districts in Massachusetts are presumed to participate in and admit non-residential students through the school choice program. School choice created an option for a family to enroll their child in a school district outside of where the child lives. Essentially, if the Medfield Public Schools participated in school choice, a student could live in any Massachusetts town and attend school in Medfield. Medfield has never participated in school choice for the 30 years it has been law.

If you look to other "like districts" you will see the same pattern of voting "no" for school choice. For example, Hopkinton, Dover Sherborn, Wayland, Weston, Wellesley, Needham, Concord, and Westwood do not admit students through the school choice program.

Although there is an opportunity to gain revenue of $5000.00 per student, (Medfield currently spends $18,769.80 per student) and to add students outside of Medfield to our enrollment, there are several concerns to consider when determining to participate in the school choice program. They are as follows:

- Increase to class size over and above Medfield enrollment - The students, teachers, and parents enjoy lower class sizes at the secondary level. Additional non-Medfield students would increase the student teacher ratio in both core classes and electives.

- Reduction of opportunities for Medfield students - In addition to increasing class size and potentially limiting access to classes/electives, non-Medfield students would take away opportunities in our athletic, music, and theatre programs.

- Medfield taxpayers subsidizing the education of non-Medfield students - Medfield currently spends over $18,000 per student to educate Medfield students. School choice students would require Medfield residents to subsidize the other $13,000 per student.

- Lack of control when demand outweighs slots - A lottery system would need to be in place if the demand from non-Medfield students is larger than the "seats" open in a particular grade level.

- Removing funding from other school districts - When school districts lose funds, staff and programs get terminated. If Medfield were to participate, we would be siphoning funds earmarked for students in another town.

- Commitment to siblings of enrolled school choice students - Medfield would have a responsibility to the non-Medfield students' siblings should slots be available in a particular grade level. This is an additional responsibility and/or expense for students not living in Medfield.

- Implications to local real estate - Parents always say they moved to Medfield for the schools. Why would you pay "Medfield prices" if you could live somewhere else and still send your children to Medfield. A local real estate agent told me there could be a negative real estate impact with school choice.

These concerns and challenges highlight the impact participating in the school choice program could have on the district. Based on these reasons, I continue to recommend that the Medfield Public Schools does not participate in the school choice program for FY25. Please reach out to me if you have any additional questions.