



BILL LEE
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SARA H. MORRISON
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

BEP Review Committee

August 19, 2020

Hon. Bill Lee
Governor of the State of Tennessee
Messenger Mail and E-Mail

Dear Governor Lee,

On behalf of the BEP Review Committee, thank you for your commitment to improving education in Tennessee. The committee has presented a targeted list of crucial priorities to the Governor and administration officials since 2015. We certainly recognize the extraordinary challenges facing the state in general, and education specifically. The COVID-19 pandemic and the related closures have created tremendous challenges in education, and education funding and our priority list reflects this situation.

The BEP Review Committee members were surveyed and the top priorities were identified. As chairman it is my duty to provide the list of 2020 priorities for funding in the upcoming budget cycle. The committee recognizes that our annual report in November comes too late to be an effective tool for you and your cabinet during the creation of the state budget, whereas a simple priority list, provided below, can be informative and useful in the budget creation process. The priorities, in order are:

1. Hold LEA funding harmless *
2. Continued commitment to increased teacher compensation
3. Increased funding for technology and accessibility
4. Funding the number of school counselors at a level closer to national best practices
5. Funding the number of school nurses at a level closer to the national best practices
6. Increased funding for Response to Intervention and Instruction (RTI2)

During the BEP Review Committee meeting on August 14, 2020, the committee adopted the following statement of acknowledgement regarding funding floors in the BEP formula due to funding levels in several school districts:

“The BEP Review Committee recommends adding a 50% “floor” for the classroom, instructional benefits, and instructional salaries components of the BEP funding formula to ensure no school system will receive less than 50% state funding in those categories. By recommending these new floors, the BEP Review Committee further recognizes that as a result of TCA 49-3-307 (a) (12) which includes a floor of

25% for non-classroom components, this recommendation could only be enacted through legislation. We further recognize that no school system could be adversely affected by the establishment of these floors.”

While every member of the committee recognizes the extraordinarily difficult fiscal environment, it is our sincere hope that this priority list will be considered as your team prepares the budget document for 2021-22.

Sincerely,



Lillian Hartgrove
Chairman, Tennessee State Board of Education

CC. Commissioner Butch Eley Tennessee Department of Finance & Administration
CC. Commissioner Penny Schwinn Tennessee Department of Education

* The Committee requests that no LEA shall experience a reduction in the calculation of 2021-2022 BEP funding as a result of a reduction in overall student membership in academic year 2020-2021 or a reduction in specific categories of student enrollment such as special education, English language learners, at-risk students, etc. The committee further requests that school systems that experience growth in ADM for school year 2020-2021 shall have that growth included in the calculations of their funding.