

Cape & Island's Municipal Leaders Association

Top Issues for Cape & Island's School Superintendents

December 12, 2025

Fortuitous Timing

Cape & Islands Superintendents Discussing On-going Issues

- Housing – impact on enrollment and staff recruitment/retention, shifting demographics
- Funding – Chapter 70, Circuit Breaker, Fair Share, SOA
- Cost Drivers – health insurance, transportation, OOD, wage demands

Approached to present at this meeting



Housing

Current Impacts on Districts

- Some districts – declining enrollment → “Hold Harmless” Chapter 70 impact
- Other districts – increased enrollment and shifting demographics
- All Districts – Staff recruitment and retention

Our Questions for the Future

- What will long term impact of sewer work be on Cape population?
 - Opportunities for more long-term, year-round rental market?
 - Opportunities for affordable ownership options (high density condos)?
- Should we be working together on municipal workforce housing?
- What can be done to bolster promote year-round economies (particularly on outer Cape)

Shifting Needs

- Composition of Town Boards and Town Meeting does not always reflect those served in our schools
- Examples:
 - Shifting demographics on the Cape have brought a growing number of multilingual families whose first language is not English. As a result, this has increased the number of learners in schools who require language support classes, specially certified staff, translation and interpretation services, and, when needed, specialized counseling support.(D-Y 30% of families, Barnstable 39% of families, Nantucket 52% of families, Monomoy 13% of families)
 - Special education & mental health needs have accelerated; especially post-COVID. Schools are “catch all” for services, programming, state/legislative mandates, etc. Most parallel to increased demands on your public safety/EMS staff

Cost Drivers

- Health Insurance – move on from CCMHG?
- Transportation – regular, special education, McKinney Vento
- Wage drivers – MTA strikes across state, housing, locally competitive hourly rates, competition finite pool
- OOD Special Education
- Although many of our districts are relatively small, we share the same needs as larger districts (students with more significant counseling/SEL needs, English Learner services, and Special Education programming). However, we don't have access to same level of resources on the Cape **and** are still legally required under state law and DESE regulations to provide those services.

School Enrollment

Factors Influencing

- Housing
 - “Air BnB Market”
 - Escalating Home Evaluation
- Shifting Demographics
- Shifting birth rates (state and nation)

* These factors combine to make reliable enrollment forecasts

Volatile Factors

- Immigration Policy and Enforcement
- School Choice/Charter
- Seasonal economy – drives transience

School Funding

Average Prop Tax Bill as % of Income (2017-2025)

MA	14.83
Cape & Islands	13.87
Cape	12.11

Average Tax Rate (2022-2026)

MA	13.04
Cape & Islands	6.42
Cape	7.10

Housing drivers impacting valuations, but tax rate & % income remains below state average.

Strong schools =

- Healthier communities
- Increased property values
- Informed electorate
- Draw young families

How do we work together to ensure that strong future for our communities?

Why Invest?

- Strong public schools support higher property values
- Strong public schools support healthy communities
- Strong public schools recruit and attract young families
- Strong public schools ensure an informed electorate, develop the local leaders of tomorrow, and are an investment in the community's future
- Strong public schools produce a loyal local workforce (nurses, police, fire, etc.) that is committed to serving its community
- Strong public schools provide ample opportunities for community partnerships, access, and pride

Questions

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