

Methuen teachers decry budget cuts, scrutinize city funding

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Jun 2, 2025

Teachers in Methuen plan to march to City Hall on Monday night to rally against Mayor David Beauregard's proposed budget for next year, which they say would cut over 80 educator positions.

The proposed reduction come after 40 teachers were cut from the schools budget last year, the local teacher's union said, equating it to eliminating an entire school's staff.

"120 positions cut in two years is an entire grammar school wiped out," said Kara Blatt, a Methuen educator and union co-president. "We must stop balancing budgets on the backs of Methuen's children and their teachers."

Schools across the state have been facing budget shortfalls over the last few years, as record high inflation has strained their budgets, coupled with declining state funding tied to enrollment decreases and the end of pandemic-era grants.

The state's Chapter 70 school funding formula has a 4.5% annual inflation cap, though inflation levels have soared much higher than that over the past few years.

According to the Massachusetts Education Justice Alliance and MassBudget, 219 districts faced shortfalls in state aid in fiscal 2025. Both MEJA and MassBudget are among those advocating for lawmakers to reform the Chapter 70 funding formula, arguing that schools will continue to face shortfalls that imperil services for students until it's addressed.

With state aid strained, more pressure has fallen on local communities to make up gaps in their schools budgets.

In Methuen, the Methuen Education Association said the city has "steadily reduced its support for public education."

"In FY2019, Methuen spent \$6 million above the state's minimum required funding level. By FY2024, that figure had dropped to just \$1.6 million. Over the same period, the City's free cash reserves ballooned more than 1,100%," the union said in a press release.

The union said 67% of Methuen students are classified as "high needs" by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. Nearly 20% are English learners and 54.3% are low-income.

Beauregard's office did not respond to a request for comment about the proposed cuts.



