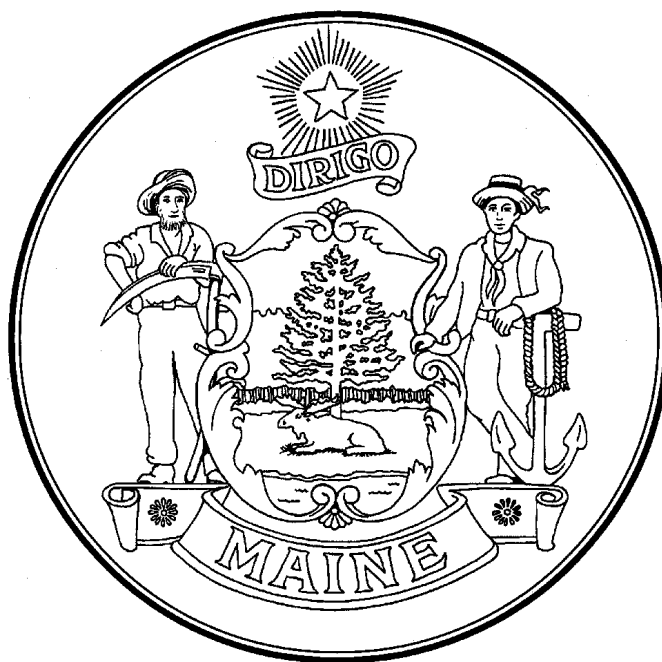


MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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School District Regionalization

LR 1415

SEN MILLS

Summary of "An Act to Increase Efficiency in School Administration"
A Concept Draft presented by Senator Peter Mills

Sources

On July 1, 2007, school units shall join a state chartered Educational Service District ("ESD") to contract for the regional delivery of administrative services. ESDs are described in depth by the Maine Heritage Policy Center in "The Maine View" issue of January 25, 2007, authored by Stephen Bowen.

ESDs are functionally similar to "Educational Cooperatives," the non-profit entities described in "A Case for Cooperation" published by the Maine Children's Alliance in August of 2006 and authored by Douglas Rooks.

The beginnings of such an entity are exemplified by the Western Maine Educational Collaborative formed in August of 2006 under the management of Mona Baker.

Functions of a Regional Service District

As envisioned here, each RSD will be state chartered. Participation in an ESD will be required for all local units including all sections of the Unorganized Territories. The geographic bounds of the ESDs will conform to the existing 26 vocational service regions except that an ESD may include more than one such region. Each ESD will be large enough to serve at least 3000 students.

Each ESD shall:

1. Continue to provide strong vocational education programming, the function for which such regions were first formed.
2. Adopt a common calendar for the region.
3. Adopt and administer a common Student Identification System.
4. Establish parallel accounting systems for each school district.
5. Serve as contract bargaining agent for each district.
6. Provide coordinated transportation services.
7. Oversee food services for each public school.
8. Support information technology for all schools including laptops for grades 7 through 12.
9. Coordinate and expand opportunities for regional and inter-regional instruction through ATM, Internet and other course sharing initiatives.
10. Perform central payroll.
11. Coordinate the efficient delivery of special education services.
12. Assist schools with comprehensive professional development programs.
13. Provide curriculum and assessment services as needed or requested.
14. Function as agent for large volume purchasing of goods & services.
15. Provide legal and medical support to each school.
16. Assist districts with energy and facilities management.
17. Maintain a pool of qualified substitute teachers for the region.
18. Assist districts in providing hospital and homebound instruction.
19. Provide regional enrichment programs for gifted and talented students.
20. Establish a protocol for the exercise of school choice among schools.
21. Provide high quality programs to counteract school violence and substance abuse.

Retained Authority of Local Districts

Member school districts will continue to:

1. Hire, oversee, evaluate and discharge teachers and other personnel.
2. Define local curriculum, assessment and professional development practices.
3. Determine the location and levels of support for individual schools.
4. Manage local budgets subject to assessments for regional services.
5. Substitute local services for those optionally offered by the ESD if the local district can provide them more effectively or at lesser cost.

This proposal will permit local districts and schools to refocus on teaching and learning. It will relieve districts from the burden of business management in order that they may manage the core function of schools, the process of education and instruction.

Governance and Structure

Each ESD will be governed by a board with proportional representation from each member district. Local school districts will support services provided by the ESD through a capitated fee or through any reasonable alternative systems agreed to by RSD members. A local district aggrieved by a cost apportionment decision of the ESD will have a right of appeal to the State Board who may, as necessary, issue substantive rules governing such issues.

Implementation

ESDs may be created immediately by state law so that each of them will be formed and begin planning operations in the summer of 2007. This will provide a year's lead time before commencing the delivery of regional services on July 1, 2008.

Because each RSD will be managed by existing public entities (the member districts), there is no delay for elections, for the assumption or allocation of public debt, or for the transfer of buildings and other assets. Interim funding of RSDs through June 30, 2008, will be supported by a capitated contribution from the state of \$100 per student. As soon as formed, each RSD may supplement its state appropriation through assessing its members if they vote to do so.

Supplementary Provisions

By July 1, 2008, every municipality contiguous to another must become part of a common school district containing at least 1200 students. Isolated small districts, non-contiguous to another, may retain their present governance. School unions are abolished. All segments of the Unorganized Territories will be assigned by state law to a nearby or adjoining district.

The bill lengthens the school year beginning in September 2008 from 180 to 190 days, of which 185 are for instruction. The State Board shall adopt a common statewide calendar beginning in September of 2009.

The bill amends the standard district budget format by breaking it into segments aligned with EPS cost categories beginning July 1, 2008. The bill provides that no new contracts with superintendents, teachers or other educational bargaining units for any period that extends beyond June 30, 2008, may be agreed to until the restructuring provisions of this bill are in place.

School District Regionalization

LR 1386

SEN EDMONDS

PART C

PART C

Sec. C-1. Regional delivery of educational administrative services; legislative findings and intent; establishment of goals.

1. Findings. The Legislature finds that:

- A. The State's annual state and local expenditure for kindergarten through grade 12 public education significantly exceeds national and peer state averages;
- B. It is the intent of the State that these state and local expenditures be brought into greater conformity with national and peer state averages and it is a role of the Legislature to establish goals to realize this intent;
- C. A number of administrative services could be provided to multiple school administrative units within defined regions within the State in a manner that would preserve or improve the quality of those services, preserve the quality of education services provided to the State's public school students and reduce the cost of providing those services for the State and the participating school administrative units;
- D. The most appropriate geographic regions within the State to begin systematically developing and implementing regionalized educational administrative services are the 26 centers or regions that currently provide career and technical education services to broader geographic regions;
- E. The State's school administrative units are varied with respect to the benefits that may be available and the efficiencies that may be achieved as a result of regionalizing certain administrative services; and
- F. The most appropriate location of decision-making authority with respect to which educational administrative services to regionalize and how to otherwise meet the goal established by the Legislature is at the local and regional level.

It is, therefore, the intent of the Legislature that this Part provide the necessary direction, guidance and resources to bring the state and local expenditures for kindergarten through grade 12 public school education into a greater conformity with national and peer state averages without impairing the quality of education services delivered to the State's public school students.

2. Goals. The following goals are established:

- A. It is the goal of the Legislature that by school year 2009-2010, the total state and local expenditure for providing school administrative services in the State, measured as a percent of personal income in this State, as estimated by the United States Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis, be reduced by a minimum of 10%.
- B. It is also the goal of the Legislature that upon the implementation of the recommendations of the planning alliances established by this Part:
 - (1) The ratio of students to administrative personnel in all regions of the State will reasonably conform to related ratios established by the essential programs and services school funding model;
 - (2) School administrative functions, including without limitation special education management, human resources management, information technology management and financial management functions, will be shared with multiple school administrative units and municipal units of government among and throughout the planning alliance regions;
 - (3) The student transportation systems throughout all regions of the State will be well planned and coordinated among the school administrative units and avoid redundancy in routing;

- (4) Labor negotiation calendars and procedures among the school administrative units will be coordinated insofar as practicable; and
- (5) The purchase of all supplies and materials common to the school administrative units and all supplies and materials common to both school administrative units and municipal units of government will be conducted in a manner designed to maximize the purchasing power of the aggregated governmental units.

Sec. C-2. Planning alliances established. For the purposes of assisting in the regional delivery of educational administrative services among all the school administrative units, 26 planning alliances are established in accordance with this section.

1. Service area. Each planning alliance shall serve the school administrative units within a geographic area defined by the State's career and technical education centers, as set out in the Maine Revised Statutes, Title 20-A, section 8402.

2. Composition. Each planning alliance is composed of 12 members, including 4 municipal officials, 4 public school officials and 4 members of the general public, all of whom must reside within the geographic area served by the career and technical education center.

A. For each planning alliance, the 4 municipal officials must be elected by caucus.

(1) According to the implementation schedule provided in section 5 of this Part, the Commissioner of Education shall notify all municipal officials serving in the geographic region served by the career and technical education center to caucus at a specified date, time and place for the purpose of electing 4 municipal officials to be members of the planning advisory committee. The commissioner or the commissioner's designee serves as nonvoting moderator for that regional caucus. Nominations for the municipal official representatives must be received from the floor. Although municipal officials residing within the career and technical education center's geographic area may be nominated, only municipal officials serving within the same geographic area and in attendance at the caucus are allowed to vote. The method of voting must be decided by voting membership. The 4 nominees receiving the most votes are approved as the municipal official members of the planning alliance, except that no municipality may have more than one representative on the planning alliance. The names of those elected by the caucus must be recorded and forwarded to the commissioner.

B. For each planning alliance, the 4 school officials must be elected by caucus.

(1) According to the implementation schedule provided in section 5 of this Part, the Commissioner of Education shall notify all school officials serving in the geographic region served by the career and technical education center to caucus at a specified date, time and place for the purpose of electing 4 school officials to be members of the planning advisory committee. The commissioner or the commissioner's designee serves as nonvoting moderator for that regional caucus. Nominations for the school official representatives must be received from the floor. Although school officials residing within the career and technical education center's geographic area may be nominated, only school officials serving within the same geographic area and in attendance at the caucus are allowed to vote. The method of voting must be decided by voting membership. The 4 nominees receiving the most votes are approved as the school official members of the planning alliance except that no school administrative unit may have more than one member on the planning alliance. The names of those elected by the caucus must be recorded and forwarded to the commissioner.

C. For each planning alliance, the 4 members of the general public are appointed as follows.

(1) The President of the Senate shall appoint one member of the general public for each planning alliance.

(2) The minority leader of the Senate shall appoint one member of the general public for each planning alliance.

(3) The Speaker of the House shall appoint one member of the general public for each planning alliance.

(4) The minority leader of the House shall appoint one member of the general public for each planning alliance.

D. Each planning alliance must be provided with one full-time staff assistant, whose salary and benefits must be provided at state expense in accordance with section 4 of this Part.

3. Terms. Members of each planning alliance serve for a period of 2 years. Any vacancy must be filled in the same manner and by the same authority as established by this section for the original appointment.

4. Timing of election and appointments. All elections and appointments of planning alliance members must be accomplished according to the implementation schedule provided in section 5 of this Part.

Sec. C-3. Planning alliance responsibilities. Each planning alliance must be convened and respond to the following charge according to the implementation schedule provided in section 5 of this Part.

1. Identification of baseline information. According to the implementation schedule provided in section 5 of this Part, each planning alliance shall for the geographic region it represents:

A. Calculate the total expenditures for educational administrative services, measure that expenditure as a percent of personal income in this State and identify the degree to which that expenditure would have to be reduced in order to comply with the goals established in section 1 of this Part;

B. Identify all the types of public school administrative units including school administrative districts, community school districts, municipal school units and any school unions that currently provide for shared superintendent services.

C. Identify the degree to which administrative services, specifically, and educational services, generally, are currently being shared between and among the school administrative units within the region or across region lines, including without limitation formal regional alliances, bulk purchasing agreements or other coalitions designed to provide regionally developed services to the participating school administrative units;

D. Identify for each school administrative unit the relationship between that school system's actual employment or budget, as applicable, and the allocated employment or budget, as applicable, as identified by the essential programs and services school funding model for the following categories: school system administration and support, operations and maintenance, special education and transportation;

E. Identify the region's current aggregate educational administrative personnel profile, measured in full-time equivalents, including, but not limited to, the following positions: superintendent, principal, special education director, transportation director, technology director, business agent or financial officer, human resources director and all reasonably equivalent positions;

F. Identify all municipal administrative services by type and position that are being similarly provided on the municipal level and might reasonably be subject to shared services arrangements, including positions in the fields of technology and financial and human resources management and all reasonably equivalent positions;

- G. Identify all major types of materials and supplies purchased by the school administrative units along with all similar materials and supplies purchased by the municipalities in the region;
- H. Identify all schedules that pertain to the school administrative units, including without limitation school calendars and all schedules for labor negotiations and contract approval, school board meetings, budget development and budget approval meetings;
- I. Map out the entire school transportation system that is used to transport students to and from school once a day;
- J. Identify all educational mandates enacted by the Legislature that could be repealed or redesigned in a manner that would eliminate the need for redundant or unnecessary educational administrative services without impairing the quality of educational services provided to the public school students; and
- K. Identify any other baseline information regarding the provision of educational administrative services within the region that the planning alliance finds to be pertinent to responding to the legislative charge.

2. Development of recommendations. According to the implementation schedule provided in section 5 of this Part, each planning alliance shall prepare in the form of preliminary recommendations a plan for the redesign of the provision of educational administrative services within the region that is appropriate to the needs of the region and would clearly meet the goals as established for the region in subsection 1, paragraph A. The plan must, at a minimum:

- A. Identify any recommended redesign of the types of school administrative units within the region, if applicable;
- B. Establish as a finding of the planning alliance the recommended number of educational administrative full-time equivalent positions that should be funded within the region for the following positions: superintendent, principal, special education director, transportation director, technology officer, business agent or financial officer, human resources director and all reasonably equivalent positions. This finding must specifically identify all recommended service sharing arrangements between and among municipalities and school administrative units within the region, particularly in the areas of technology, transportation maintenance, human resources and financial management, as those recommended arrangements would affect the recommended personnel profile;
- C. Recommend a specific set of adjustments to the region's current profile of administrative personnel to be implemented over the next 2-year period that would serve to adjust the current personnel profile as identified under subsection 1, paragraph E to the recommended personnel profile;
- D. Recommend, as applicable, the organization or reorganization of any joint purchasing arrangements between and among the school administrative units within the region and between and among the school administrative units and the municipalities within the region;
- E. Recommend, to the extent necessary to achieve the goals of this Part and facilitate other recommendations of the planning alliance, the coordination of schedules, including without limitation, school calendars, labor contract negotiations, school board meetings, school budget development and adoption meetings;
- F. Recommend, as applicable, the development of coordinated regional or subregional school transportation systems; and
- G. Recommend any changes to state law that would assist the region in meeting the goals of this Part without impairing the quality of educational services provided to State's public school students.

3. Outreach. According to the implementation schedule provided in section 5 of this Part, each planning alliance shall hold public hearings on its preliminary recommendations. At a minimum, a public hearing must be held at a school facility in each school administrative unit or school union within the region. On the basis of the information provided and input received at the public hearings, each planning alliance shall amend the preliminary recommendations as appropriate to develop its final recommendations according to the implementation schedule in section 5 of this Part.

4. Transmittal and implementation of final recommendations. Each planning alliance shall adopt its final recommendations according to the implementation schedule provided in section 5 of this Part. The final recommendations must identify the goals that must be met within the region to comply with the goals established by this Part and clearly identify by what means and by when the goals will be reached through the implementation of the recommendations of the planning alliance.

A. Each planning alliance shall formally transmit to every school board within the planning alliance region the final recommendations in a format that includes:

- (1) The complete report for the school board's records;
- (2) An executive summary of the entire report suitable for presentation to the legislative body of the school administrative unit to consider for adoption;
- (3) The specific recommendations pertaining to the school administrative unit that fall within the authority of the school board to implement, suitable for presentation to the school board to consider for adoption; and
- (4) The specific recommendations pertaining to the school administrative unit that fall within the authority of the legislative body of the school administrative unit to implement, suitable for presentation to that legislative body to consider for adoption.

B. The school board and the legislative body of every school administrative unit within the planning alliance region shall act on the recommendations transmitted to them according to the implementation schedule provided in section 5 of this Part.

Sec. C-4. Resources and Department of Education responsibilities.

1. Resources. Notwithstanding any other law, the highest priority of distribution from the Fund for the Efficient Delivery of Educational Services as established in the Maine Revised Statutes, Title 20-A, section 15754 for fiscal year 2007-08 and fiscal year 2008-09 is to provide the staff support and other related support to the planning alliances as required by this Part.

2. Department of Education responsibilities. The Department of Education shall assist in the implementation of this Part as set out in this subsection:

A. The Department of Education shall adopt rules to assist in the implementation of this Part. Rules adopted pursuant to this paragraph are routine technical rules as defined in the Maine Revised Statutes, Title 5, chapter 375, subchapter 2-A. At a minimum, those rules must:

- (1) Specifically define the career and technical education regions within the State both geographically and according to each region's school administrative units;
- (2) Identify by position and support position all educational administrative services that should be reasonably included in the analysis conducted by each planning alliance;
- (3) Establish the minimum qualifications, job description and salary and benefit range for each planning alliance's full-time staff assistant; and
- (4) Provide for a system of administration of the Fund for the Efficient Delivery of Educational Services, modeled after the system of administration for the Fund for the Efficient Delivery of Local and Regional Services provided in the Maine Revised Statutes, Title 30-A,

chapter 231 and including the automatic payment of salary and benefits for one full-time staff assistant for each planning alliance in accordance with section 2 of this Part.

B. In addition to any responsibilities required by this Part or imposed by rule, the Department of Education shall assist in the implementation of this Part by:

- (1) Assisting all planning alliances in the collection and presentation of data pertinent to the charge established by this Part;
- (2) Assisting in the organization of caucuses as provided in section 2 of this Part;
- (3) Providing or contracting for facilitation services to be provided to the planning alliances to ensure their ability to fulfill the charges required by this Part; and
- (4) Submitting interim progress reports to the Legislature no later than January 1, 2008 and January 1, 2009 and a final report no later than January 1, 2010 that describe the compliance of the planning alliances with the requirements of this Part.

Sec. C-5. Implementation schedule. The various charges established by this Part must be accomplished according to the following schedule.

1. Appointments and caucuses. The initial appointments and caucuses of municipal and school officials required by section 2 of this Part must be completed no later than October 1, 2007.

2. Hiring of staff assistants. The full-time staff assistant for each planning alliance must be hired by the planning alliance no later than December 1, 2007.

3. Convening of planning alliances. The planning alliances must be convened no later than January 1, 2008.

4. Completion of identification and baseline information. The planning alliances shall complete the identification of baseline information as required by section 3, subsection 1 of this Part no later than July 1, 2008.

5. Develop preliminary recommendations. The planning alliances shall complete the development of their preliminary recommendations as required by section 3, subsection 2 of this Part no later than September 1, 2008.

6. Outreach effort. The planning alliances shall complete the outreach effort required by section 3, subsection 3 of this Part no later than January 1, 2009.

7. Final recommendations. The planning alliances shall develop their final recommendations and transmit those recommendations as required by section 3, subsection 4 of this Part no later than February 1, 2009.

8. Consider and act on recommendations. The school boards and the legislative bodies of the school administrative units shall consider and act on the recommendations of the planning alliances no later than July 1, 2009.

Sec. C-6. Sunset; achievement of required efficiencies Unless reauthorized by the Legislature, this Part is repealed February 1, 2010. It is the intent of the Legislature that the goals of section 1, subsection 2 of this Part be achieved by that date. If the goals of this Part have not been achieved in a career and technical education region served by a planning alliance pursuant to this Part, the Commissioner of Education shall present to the joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over education matters a plan for the reorganization of all school administrative units within that career and technical education region. The commissioner's plan must be designed to achieve the goals of section 1, subsection 2 of this Part. The joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over education matters is authorized to submit legislation in the Second

Regular Session of the 124th Legislature that reorganizes the school administrative units within any career and technical education region that has failed to achieve the goals of this Part by February 1, 2010.

SUMMARY

Part C of this bill establishes as a goal a 10% reduction by the year 2010 in the statewide expenditure for educational administrative services in kindergarten to grade 12 public education as that expenditure is measured as a percent of total personal income. It establishes goals for specific categories of costs and services. It also establishes a comprehensive system of analysis, recommendation, outreach and implementation to be accomplished on the local level through the creation of regional planning alliances to achieve that goal within the 26 career and technical education regions in Maine. If the cost reduction goal is not achieved, the Commissioner of Education must submit a plan to the Legislature to achieve the cost reductions

TESTIMONY REGARDING LEGISLATIVE PROPOSALS RELATIVE TO
SCHOOL ADMINISTRATIVE UNIT CONSOLIDATION AND
OTHER RELATED ISSUES

FEBRUARY 5, 2007

SENATOR BOWMAN, REPRESENTATIVE NORTON, SENATOR ROTUNDO, REPRESENTATIVE FISCHER, AND MEMBERS OF THE JOINT STANDING COMMITTEES ON EDUCATION AND CULTURAL AFFAIRS AND APPROPRIATIONS AND FINANCIAL AFFAIRS, MY NAME IS JERRY T. WHITE, MSAD #31/#65/DENNSTOWN PLANTATION SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS. AND I THOUGHT I RETIRED IN 2001.

THERE ARE SEVERAL PIECES OF LEGISLATION ADDRESSING THE SUBJECT OF CONSOLIDATION, SO I WISH TO ADDRESS GENERAL ISSUES IMPACTING THE ASSUMPTIONS MADE TO GET US TO THIS POINT.

1. CAN YOU CONSOLIDATE BUSINESS FUNCTIONS RELATED TO THE SUPERINTENDENT'S OFFICE AND OTHER IMPACTS.
 - a. THERE IS AN OPPORTUNITY TO CONSOLIDATE SERVICES WITHOUT MUCH DIFFICULTY.
 - b. THE IMPACT WILL BE THE LOSS OF SEVERAL HUNDRED JOBS AND THE PEOPLE IN THOSE JOBS, TAKING A FAIR AMOUNT OF THE PROJECTED FIRST YEAR SAVINGS AWAY FROM THE THE TOTAL PROJECTED.
 - c. DON'T FORGET THE ESTIMATED 650+ TEACHING JOBS THAT WILL DISAPPEAR THE FIRST YEAR AND MAY CONTINUE IN SUBSEQUENT YEARS.
 - d. FOR A SUPERINTENDENT, THE ABILITY TO TALK WITH EMPLOYEES/TEACHERS ON A DAILY BASIS ELMINATES 99% OF PERSONNEL/CONTRACT PROBLEMS IN A SCHOOL DISTRICT. THE CONCEPT OF 'MBWA' IS PARAMOUNT.
2. CAN COOPERATIVE BUYING PRACTICES MAKE SCHOOLS MORE HIGHLY EFFICIENT IN THEIR PURCHASING PRACTICES AS PROMULAGATED BY THE DOE
 - a. SCHOOL BUS PURCHASES ARE NOW BEING BID BY THE STATE-MY INFORMATION FROM ONE MAJOR SUPPLIER OF

BUSES INDICATES NO FURTHER DISCOUNTS SHOULD BE ASSUMED ON THE PART OF THE DOE.

- b. ALMOST ALL SCHOOLS DISTRICTS PARTICIPATE IN COOPERATIVE FOOD BUYING THROUGH FOOD COOPS ESTABLISHED BY CONSORTIA OF SCHOOLS. IT WOULD UNLIKELY FOR THE FOOD SUPPLIERS TO REDUCE THEIR PRODUCT PRICING BELOW THEIR COST, THUS VERY LITTLE, IF ANY, SAVING WOULD BE FORTHCOMING.
 - c. THERE IS A STATE-WIDE #2 HEATING OIL PURCHASING GROUP, AS WELL AS, OTHER CONSORTIA. THE FACT OF THE MATTER IS OIL DEALERS PURCHASE THEIR HEATING ON FUTURES FIXED PRICE CONTRACTS AND SHOULD THE PRICE DECREASE FROM THE FIXED PRICE CONTRACT, OIL DEALERS WILL NOT DECREASE THEIR PRICE. IF THEY DID THEY EXPERIENCE A SIGNIFICANT LOSS OF INCOME-ALTRUISTIC THEY ARE NOT.
 - d. ACTEM, A STATE-WIDE SOFTWARE AND HARDWARE GROUP, IS THE MOST SIGNIFICANT TECHNOLOGY ORGANIZATION IN THE STATE. HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF DOLLARS HAVE BEEN SAVED BY SCHOOLS THROUGH THIS GROUP SINCE 1999.
 - e. ELECTRICITY PURCHASING HAS THE SAME PROBLEM AS HEATING OIL.
 - f. ULTIMATELY, THE SAVINGS FROM ALL OF THESE SOURCES ARE FINITE AND, PROBABLY, HAVE BEEN REACHED.
3. VARIOUS CONSORTIA AROUND THE STATE OPERATE REGIONAL STAFF TRAINING FOR BOTH PROFESSIONAL AND NON-PROFESSIONAL STAFF. THE PRESENT MOVE BY THE DOE TO FOLD PER PUPIL PROFESSIONAL STAFF DEVELOPMENT FUNDS INTO THE EPS FORMULA SIMPLY SHIFTS THE COST FROM A LEGISLATIVE APPROPRIATION TO A LOCAL APPROPRIATION, THUS REQUIRING THE LOCAL DISTRICT TO FUND THROUGH THEIR SUBSIDY WHAT HAS BEEN A SEPARATE APPROPRIATION FROM THE LEGISLATURE.
- a. HAVING BEEN A FOUNDING MEMBER OF ECO2000 IN 1991, I CAN ATTEST TO THE EFFICACY OF POOLING REGIONAL FUNDS TO PROVIDE COMPREHENSIVE AND EFFECTIVE STAFF TRAINING.
 - b. THROUGH THE USE OF A GRANTS WRITER, ECO2000 WAS ABLE TO BECOME A LEADER IN TECHNOLOGY INTEGRATION, LONG-TERM TRAINING, ESTABLISHMENT OF AN ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL, WHICH STILL MEETS THE NEEDS OF THOSE STUDENTS FOR WHOM THE REGULAR SCHOOL PROGRAM DOES NOT, AND MANY OTHER INITIATIVES THAT CONTINUE TODAY.

- c. AROUND MSAD #31/HOWLAND, WE HAVE THE NORTH WOODS PARTNERSHIP PROVIDING LEADERSHIP AND DIRECTION FOR THE REGION WIDE STAFF TRAINING.
- 4. TECHNOLOGY HAS BEEN AT THE FOREFRONT OF MANY EFFORTS INCLUDING THE LAPTOP PROGRAM. THE DOE HAS TO REACH OUT TO THE KNOWLEDGEABLE PEOPLE IN THE FIELD TO REVAMP THE ATM PROGRAM, LOOK AT OTHER INITIATIVES THAT SUPPORT THE LAPTOP PROGRAM, AND MOVE INTO THE HIGH SCHOOL.
 - a. ECO2000 HAS THE ONLY ONLINE CYBERSCHOOL ESTABLISHED AND SUPPORTED BY ITS MEMBER SCHOOLS IN THE STATE OF MAINE. ALL OTHER ONLINE OFFERINGS ARE, GENERALLY, FOR PROFIT CORPORATE ENTITIES.
 - b. THE CYBERSCHOOL HAS BEEN ASSIDUOUSLY IGNORED BY THE DOE SINCE ITS FOUNDING IN 1997. THE SCHOOL DOES NOT FIT INTO THE THINKING OF THE STATE EDUCATION ESTABLISHMENT TO THE DETRIMENT OF OUR STUDENTS.
 - c. THE CYBERSCHOOL WAS ESTABLISHED WITH THE ENCOURAGEMENT OF THE MEMBER SCHOOLS BOARDS WHO FELT WE NEEDED TO BROADEN THE CURRICULUM WITHOUT INCREASING STAFF POSITIONS. THIS PROGRAM HAS AND CONTINUES TO SUCCEED EXTREMELY WELL.
- 5. FINALLY, I WISH TO ADDRESS SOMETHING THAT HAS NOT BEEN SPOKEN ABOUT DURING THIS WHOLE PROCESS- TRAINING OF OUR TEACHERS AND SUPERINTENDENTS.
 - a. THE UNIVERSITY PROGRAMS ARE NOT EFFECTIVELY TRAINING OUR TEACHERS TO MEET THE CHALLENGES THEY FIND IN THE CLASSROOM.
 - b. TEACHERS ARE COMING TO US WITHOUT A SOLID FOUNDATION OF CLASSROOM TECHNOLOGY INTEGRATION CAUSING THE LOCAL SCHOOL SYSTEM TO EXPEND TRAINING FUNDS TO BRING NEW TEACHERS UP TO OUR STANDARD.
 - c. THE TRAINING PROGRAM FOR SUPERINTENDENTS IS WOEFULLY LACKING IN BUSINESS MANAGEMENT TRAINING.
 - d. THE REORGANIZATION OF SCHOOL DISTRICTS CALLS FOR BUDGETS THAT ARE HUGE, BY MAINE STANDARDS, REQUIRING DUE DILIGENCE OF BUDGET MANAGEMENT. THE UNIVERSITY'S PROGRAM FOR TRAINING OF SUPERINTENDENTS IS VIRTUALLY VOID OF MANAGEMENT COURSE WORK NECESSARY FOR OPERATING SCHOOL DISTRICTS OF THIS MAGNITUDE, CONTRARY TO WHAT YOU MIGHT HEAR FROM THE VARIOUS UNIVERSITY CAMPUSES.

6. SHOULD THERE BE SOME REORGANIZATION-I BELIEVE IT WILL BE POSSIBLE. HOWEVER, THIS PLAN APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN HATCHED VERY QUICKLY, BY A FEW PEOPLE, WITH LITTLE OR NO CONTACT WITH THE IMPACTED ENTITIES.
7. THE ESTIMATES FOR SAVING UP TO \$250 MILLION SEEM TO HAVE AN ELEMENT OF SMOKE AND MIRRORS AT WHICH YOU NEED TO TAKE A VERY CLOSE LOOK AND DETERMINE FOR YOURSELVES WHAT THE ULTIMATE EDUCATIONAL IMPACT WILL BE, CONSIDERING THE POLITICAL HURDLES YOU WILL HAVE TO OVERCOME.

THANK YOU

To the Honorable Senators and Representatives (of the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs and of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs):

I was a high school teacher for 26 years. For 6 years I have been a principal. Please don't think that I am here today to fight for my job, because I hope that retirement is in my near future. I am here today as a taxpayer of the State of Maine.

As a taxpayer, I want to say, "Something is not right."

Something is not right when the proposal for a major change in the delivery of educational services appears in the governor's budget shortly after an election campaign. This proposal should have come to the general public for a full discussion and debate during the campaign itself.

If, on the other hand, the governor's proposal was written in three weeks after the election as we are told, then something is not right with that either. Any important proposal deserves robust dialogue that examines all of its sections including, as one of my colleagues would say, the "unintentional consequences" of its implementation.

Experts like Michael Fullan tell us that successful change comes when all stakeholders have an opportunity to put their two cents into the dialogue. Did you get a chance to do that? I didn't. Something is just not right about that.

The Governor repeatedly says that this proposal is not about closing schools, yet right there in §1480 and later on in §4102-A.3 is the language that has everyone concerned. Why would a proposal to simply regionalize the offices of the superintendents contain language for closing schools? Something is not right about that.

Section MM-116 of the Governor's proposal talks about how towns will turn their assets over to the regional learning community. I do not hear the Governor talking about that a great deal, and I wonder why? Something is not right about that.

If I'm reading page eleven of the "Brookings report" correctly, we should conduct one or two pilots in regional service delivery before we make a full-scale change. We'd know then what exactly the costs would be. Our Governor seems to have ignored this suggestion, and quite honestly, something is not right about that.

I am not opposed to change...thoughtful change that is. So, please listen to this taxpayer...don't jump to pass the Governor's proposal or any other. Take your time. Think about the unintentional consequences. Include us in the dialogue.

Something would be very "right" about that.

Thank you.

Phyllis W. Merritt
Taxpayer in the town of Jonesport, ME

**LR 1148, "An Act to Encourage School Administrative Units to
Collaborate with other School Administrative Units
Sponsor: Rep. Kim Silsby**

Be it enacted by the People of the State of Maine as follows:

**CONCEPT DRAFT
SUMMARY**

This bill is a concept draft pursuant to Joint Rule 208.

The bill proposes to provide the opportunity for current school administrative units to form regional cooperatives to aid in the efficient delivery of educational services while maintaining a high-quality educational system for students, teachers, community members and schools. The bill would balance the independence of the legislative bodies of school administrative units and local control with the efficient delivery of administrative services for schools, while enhancing the educational programs provided for pre-kindergarten through grade 12 public education students in Maine.

Under this bill, school administrative units would form regional cooperatives that serve at least 2,800 students. The bill would also establish the Efficient Delivery of Educational Services Commission, referred to in this concept draft as the "commission," whose responsibilities include management of the fund, along with supporting, approving and monitoring the progress of the regional cooperatives. The regional cooperatives would apply to the commission for approval and financial incentives through the existing Fund for the Efficient Delivery of Educational Services. The commission would implement reorganization and cost savings for school administrative units that do not participate in a regional cooperative or school administrative units that are unable to achieve the cost savings benchmarks established by the commission for regional cooperatives.

Key Elements:

1. A school administrative unit may enter into an agreement with another school administrative unit or units to form a regional cooperative to increase efficiency and lower costs of delivering public education for pre-kindergarten through grade 12 students and to provide for equitable, high-quality education for all students.
2. School administrative units would develop regional cooperatives that are contiguous and advantageous to the community and its delivery of an educational system for pre-kindergarten through grade 12 students.
3. A statewide commission would be formed to support, approve, and monitor regional cooperatives.
 - A. The membership of the commission would include the Commissioner of Education, the Commissioner of Administrative and Financial Services, two members of the Legislature to be appointed by the Speaker of the House and the Senate President, a member of the State Board of Education, four members representing public school officials, and four members of the general public appointed by the Governor; and

B. The commission would approve regional cooperatives and offer financial incentives to regional cooperatives through the Fund for the Efficient Delivery of Educational Services established in Title 20-A, section 15754.

C. The commission would define the expenditures to be included in the system administration cost category established in Title 20-A, section 15680 and would establish benchmarks for the level of per-pupil cost savings to be achieved by school administrative units for the 2008-2009 and 2010-2011 legislative biennia. The benchmarks selected by the commission would be based on either the national average or the average of peer states of per-pupil expenditures for the system administration cost category. The definition of the system administration cost category developed by the commission would include, but would not be limited to, the following:

- (1) Financial management functions
- (2) Administrative personnel
- (3) Transportation
- (4) Facilities and maintenance
- (5) Human resource management
- (6) Supplies and equipment
- (7) Fuel and utilities
- (8) Specialized education
- (9) School nutrition programs
- (10) Professional development

D. The commission would make an annual recommendation to the Commissioner of Education for the enactment of a per-pupil expenditure rate for the distribution of state subsidy under the Essential Programs and Services Funding Act over this four year period in order to ensure that the per-pupil expenditures for the system administration cost category established in Title 20-A, section 15680 would be reduced each year until this rate matches the benchmark for the per-pupil expenditures for system administration cost category selected by the commission by fiscal year 2010-11.

E. The commission would also provide models of efficient and effective governance and administrative structures that promote student achievement, including data that can be used by school boards, superintendents, and school administrative units that participate in existing or emerging regional cooperatives;

F. The commission would be required to submit a quarterly report to the Legislature and the Governor on the progress of regional cooperatives. The commission would submit a report on the educational mandates that are in statute that contribute to costs of education at state and local level and will make recommendations to the Legislature.

4. In order for an entity to qualify for approval by commission as a regional cooperative, the entity has a minimum of 2,800 students and establishes a regional plan to generate cost savings in the delivery of public education services from pre-kindergarten through grade 12 that contains:

A. A mission statement and related cost saving goals and objectives;

B. A plan that establishes a governance body and organization;

C. Specific cost saving targets for per-pupil system administration which meet the per-pupil expenditures for the system administration cost category established in Title 20-A, section 15680 and the benchmarks for the per-pupil expenditures for system administration cost category selected by the commission.

D. A plan for reimbursement of the savings realized through implementation of the regional plan to taxpayers;

E. A plan for the regional cooperative to report annually to the citizenry on the ongoing school improvement process and the school administrative unit's updated comprehensive educational plan; and

F. A plan to review and ensure the sustainability of the cost effectiveness of local schools.

5. The commission may approve some extreme cases of geographic hardship for less than the approved number of students.

6. School administrative units with a current student population of at least 2,800 would not be required to form regional cooperatives, but would be required to comply with the annual per-pupil expenditure benchmarks for the system administration cost category established by the commission. If the commission determines that such a school administrative unit fails to meet these benchmarks, then the commission would develop and implement a reorganization and cost savings plan for the school administrative unit.

7. If a school administrative unit has not entered into a regional cooperative by June 2009 or if the commission determines that school administrative unit has failed to meet the annual per-pupil expenditure benchmarks for the system administration cost category established by the commission, then the commission would develop and implement a reorganization and cost savings plan for the school administrative unit.

Timeline:

From September 2007 to June 2008: School administrative units seek input from the public about regional cooperatives and begin planning regional cooperatives;

By June 2008: School administrative units form regional cooperatives and apply to the commission;

By July 2008: Commission approves regional cooperatives;

By June 2009: Regional cooperatives implement plans, make adjustments, and report cost-savings;

By July 2009: Commission implements reorganization and cost saving plans for school administrative units that have not entered into a regional cooperative or that have failed to meet the annual per-pupil expenditure benchmarks for the system administration cost category established by the commission.

By May 2010: Regional cooperatives realign work, plan for sustainability, and report progress.

My name is Brandee' Beal and I'm an 8th grader from Beals Elementary School. We have a student population of 51. I feel threatened by Baldacci's proposal because I feel that this proposal will lead to the closure of many small schools. We will lose our local school boards and will be governed by the regional board. This new board won't have the interest in our small school and without representation we are faced with the closure of our school. Maybe some think this is a better way to get an education to kids, but I happen to strongly disagree. Think of all the small schools that would have to be combined. Combining all the small schools into one means we would have to build a new, gigantic school. This project would cost so much money and the chances of us going in debt increase because the expenses would be completely outrageous.

Coming from a student who attends a small school, my opinion is small schools give an excellent education. In my classroom, there are only 16 students between 7th and 8th grade. I get a very good education and with my education, one day, I plan on getting a good job. If it wasn't for the teachers I have had throughout my years at Beals Elementary, I wouldn't have the grades I do today. I am a straight A student and I have always strived for Honor Roll average just as many in my school have. I also like the idea of small school teachers knowing all of their students. Another good point of attending a small school is knowing every student in my school.

I really believe that getting a good education in a small school has more

positive effects on students than negative effects. It is important to listen to the voice of students. We don't just want an education, but a good education. I believe we are not going to benefit from a larger school. Even the sound of a larger school with more rooms, students, and teachers, doesn't seem to make for a better education or a brighter future. Kids will just be another face in the crowd to the teachers. There will be no one-on-one because teachers just won't have the time. Most kids who were once thriving in school and were making Honor Roll will most likely fall behind. Kids like encouragement from their teachers. It gives them the confidence to do well. I picture kids who have learning disabilities being left behind and not getting the attention they deserve. But what happened to the "No Child Left Behind" program? It sounds like to me there is a possibility some child will be left behind.

I wonder, has Governor Baldacci really thought about this ? It's not only the students that will be affected, but the teachers and our community as well. So many teachers may possibly lose their jobs, many that have families to support. Some may not be able to find another occupation. Our school is the only thing we have left in our town that brings us together. People young and old come out to enjoy functions put on by our local schools.

We realize this proposal doesn't focus on the closing of our local schools, but when we lose our local school boards and we have absolutely no representation, how else should we feel but Threatened?

With Great Respect,
Brandee' M. Beal

Brandee' M. Beal

Hello, my name is Sylvina Lyons from Beals, Maine. I am a school board member of Union 103 and Moosabec CSD. Our elementary school has an enrollment of 55 and our high school has an enrollment of 82. Our students have continued to show academic excellence year after year. We have a low drop-out rate and a high rate of matriculation.

Over the past several years we have made many cuts in our budget including transportation, maintenance, and administration. We are sharing services with Jonesport Elementary School and Jonesport-Beals High School. We have tried to be responsible to both our taxpayers and our schools. Even with the devastating effects of EPS on our system we still provide quality education to our children. Somehow we have managed to survive. We believe that our children will receive the best education if they are educated within our community and with our citizens making the decisions. Our town has always been extremely supportive of our schools, even though our state subsidy continues to decrease.

LSRS threatens to take that commitment and control away from our community. We have no idea what our representation will be in the new region. We are a small town of approximately 600. I have always been part of either a union or a municipality. I now reside between 2 SADs. Each got along until funding was cut and some thought certain schools should be closed. Due to the varying degrees between valuation and enrollment there was much dissension between towns. One SAD broke up and the other is looking into dissolving. So I ask, "How can a region which includes SADs that haven't worked and unions which have always had control of the education of their children, be expected to get along especially when some towns and schools will not have a representative on the regional board." When deciding budgets for a region I would think it would only benefit the entire region to have representative from each town even if the votes have to be weighted. We definitely know our children's needs better. I do not think advisory councils are a fair way to say we have control, there

is no power attached to those committees. Our children's education will be negatively effected if someone else controls our budget.

The more I read and hear about LSRS, the more doubts and unanswered questions I have. A reform of this magnitude should require a more careful analysis of the possible outcomes. I hope the decision you make is based on accurate information involving many different scenarios. LSRS needs a lot of work and there are other proposals that would be a better fit for the people of Maine. I hope all proposals are studied and considered.

We as citizens challenge you to find out specific information about how this will effect our children and their education. There are savings to be had, but not at the expense of any child and not by a proposal with so many unanswered questions. LSRS will negatively effect our town, our schools, and most importantly our children.

Due to time constraints, I have touched on only one problem with LSRS that will effect our children, but there are many and I am sure that they will all be presented to you today. Please take the time and money, if necessary, to study all the proposals very carefully before making your decision.

As I prepared to get my thoughts together and tried to figure the best way to convey the message, I realized Maine is a simple way of life and that is truly the way life should be. I will simply state how school consolidation could drastically impact our way of life.

Personally, I value the small schools that we have across our state. As a lifelong resident of Maine I have seen first hand the changes that have taken place over the years. I grew up in Sidney, which is a small town a few miles from here and have family and friends who still live there. The growth in that one town alone is tremendous and I am amazed at how the school has changed and multiplied in size over time.

In Greenville we have small classrooms, which creates a safe learning environment. Classmates, teachers and parents know everyone personally and this provides a wonderful line of communication. It scares me to think if my three boys would be placed in classrooms where the teacher might not know their name, their abilities or their community.

As an active volunteer in our school and community, I value the importance of a good education. I see first hand what happens in a classroom and how the learning is extended to the home environment. If you deprive parents of being actively involved in their child's education, you have done a disservice to everyone involved. If parents only see the teachers at parent teacher conferences a lot slips through the cracks. Relationships that are created in the classroom will form a solid foundation for the families, school and community alike.

A few years ago we created *LIFE* in Greenville which represents Learning in Families Everyday. As an active literacy volunteer for nearly 20 years I could recognize the need to help families that struggle with reading. The best way to approach that we decided was to keep an open line of communication from school to home. We have monthly family nights, book discussion programs, nutritional meal planning and a pre-school program. We provide transportation for some families because they would otherwise not be able to attend. If we lose programs like this it would kill the spirit of families who depend on such services. We have families who participate and the results are incredible - high school diplomas, driving licenses, increased reading abilities in the classrooms, etc. Our graduating students are all going on to further their education and many are attending high caliber schools, which bodes well for our school.

There is a lot more that takes place in a small school and community that we have time to address today. However, we must recognize the facts that school consolidation will negatively impact our local municipalities across the state regardless of our size and location. If we lose our school, the hospital will inevitably follow suit, the essence of our communities will disappear and families will relocate which force the strong foundation of Maine to collapse.

I grew up in a large family and truly know that many hands make light work and it appears the same is true for education. If we try to change things too drastically our children, our communities and our state will all pay the price in the long run.

Bette DiAngelo
Greenville, Maine

My name is Sharon Church, I was a Business Education teacher in Jonesport for several years and later became a member of the Moosabec School Board for over ten years. I own and operate a True Value Hardware store in Jonesport and have for the past 20 years. I am speaking as a tax payer and business person

My concern is the time frame of the Governor's proposal and the lack of input from the educators, specifically Superintendents, Principals and teachers in the State.

About 5 years ago my husband and I decided to open a rental program in our store, which was going to cost a substantial amount of money. We took the time to have a survey done in our community and the surrounding communities to get their input. We also had to take into consideration, the best time of the year to institute such a program. We talked extensively with other true value members that had the same Just Ask Rental program to get the pros and cons and to see what kind of impact it would have on our cash flow. These were major business decisions that we had to make before we implemented the costly program.

I understand that you work with a budget much larger than mine, which is all the more reason for you to take a closer look. If you want to make changes and save money, it doesn't make sense to me, as a business person, to just hurriedly make a plan with little or no input from the major people it is going to impact. It makes it look like you have little or no respect for, or trust in, the people who are running our school systems.

We all know that some changes must be made, but you also must realize the diversity in this state from county to county. As a taxpayer and business person in the state of Maine, I want input from those people directly involved in educating our children, that means our Superintendents, Principals, and teachers need to be consulted. I also feel that those of us who are taxpayers may have something to add. It cannot and should not come from someone who is looking for a place he THINKS, and I emphasize THINKS, will be the right place to save the state some money! Thank you.

Sharon Church
PO Box 570
Jonesport, ME 04649

TESTIMONY OF ANNALEE ROSENBLATT

Good day. My name is Annalee Rosenblatt. I am Chairman of the Scarborough Board of Education and am serving my second 3 year term on the Board. For over the past 25 years I have worked as a professional labor relations consultant representing elected officials in the State of Maine. I have been a public high school teacher, worked for the National Education Association, and negotiated labor contracts for teachers and school boards in the states of Maine, New York, and Massachusetts.

Consolidation is not a bad idea. However, local citizens and officials find this meat axe approach of the Governor's plan to be another State mandate with estimates of how many tax payer dollars will be saved unsupported by evidence and absolutely no guarantee local property tax would be reduced or capped because there is no guarantee spending will be reduced. The loss of local control is frightening.

PROPERTY AND DEBT

Scarborough recently renovated its high school at a cost of \$27,000,000. This bond was paid for 100% by local taxpayers. The Scarborough citizens oppose the State taking of property and turning it over to a new owner while requiring the citizens of Scarborough to be responsible for the debt. The Town of Scarborough, not the School Department currently manages our buildings for all non-school related activities.

Adult education and other educational events, dozens of athletic, cultural, and hobby activities; fund raising, and other community events take place in our school buildings; including an extensive before and after school day care program in 4 of our 7 school buildings for thousands of Scarborough residents. These programs are run by the Town, not the school department in a cooperative relationship between the Town and the School. The loss of control of our 6 school buildings and the potential that our Town will have to enter into contractual relationships with a regional group in order to use the buildings it paid for is not only unacceptable, it feels un-American and will surely result in an increase in costs, which translates into local property tax increases or a substantial increase in fees for our citizens if we want to continue to run these programs. Our Town will have to negotiate with people who may not even be familiar with our community regarding our community needs. It is a classic loss of local control.

PAY AND BENEFITS

It would not be unreasonable to think that a Superintendent who is currently paid \$100,000 for a 3000 pupil district would not expect to be paid \$300,000 - 4600,000 for an 18,000 pupil district, a 3-6 fold increase in both numbers. This rationale can be applied right down the line to all other administrators in this mega district. It would not be long before these employees would need additional assistants. If you need 1 assistant for a 3000 pupil district, you surely would need 5-6 assistants for an 18,000 pupil district. The same numbers of state and federal reports still need to be generated. More powerful and expensive computer software and hardware would need to be updated to store and generate all the new centralized data.

The proposed legislation has mandated the expiration date of all labor agreements with employee rather than by the collective bargaining process itself. When SAD 43 and Rumford merged, without a State mandate by the way, the employees received the best pay, benefits, and working conditions as determined by the employees not the Board, from the two entities.

This did not generate a savings in salary or benefits. If the legislature respects the collective bargaining process it has enacted, it will not mandate any process, pay, working conditions, or deadlines regarding these matters, but leave it totally to the local officials to determine. Otherwise, such as in the SAD 43 and Rumford merger, the employees will end up with the best from each district, not an average. If new employers are going to be created, the employer should have the right and privileges of any other new employer to be able to develop a new more modern set of policies and procedures, properly and legally recognize new bargaining agents, have the opportunity to negotiate new contracts, not inherit ones already negotiated by a diverse group of employers, and not force employees not now into collective bargaining agreements represented by bargaining agents not voluntarily selected, as a result of such merger.

When the legislature created the Lincoln Sagadahoc Jail Authority that is exactly what happened. Even though there was no mandate from the legislature, the new Jail Authority was able to create policies and procedures along with terms and conditions of employment on its own including enhanced benefits for employees voluntarily agreeing to work for the new employer. No employee wanting to work for the new employer was turned away and while they received different benefits than they had before, they receive some of the best, if not the best, benefits in the State of Maine for a correctional institution. Don't mandate the remnants of an old employer onto the new one.

CENTRAL OFFICE SPACE

In my area, no current school district has sufficient office space to accommodate this new centralized administration staff and most public buildings are full to capacity. New office space, built or rented would be needed. Has this increased cost been deducted from the savings that will be generated? Will each old entity still store and maintain its own fleet of school buses, or will they all be parked in a central location. Will there be a new maintenance garage built? Will maintenance now performed by the Town for Scarborough buses be done somewhere else? What if the Town and the new entity cannot successfully negotiate a contract for the cost of continuing to do the maintenance and store the buses? Will there be multiple contracts with multiple service providers for bus and vehicle maintenance? For employees who have business to conduct or are required to report to the central office, will this be on work time, thereby reducing teaching time for teachers and production by other employees? For some, the time to travel could be extensive. This is an added cost to the new mega district and not a savings to the taxpayers of Scarborough. In fact, our proportionate share could be increased substantially.

LOCAL CONTROL

The decision making process gets further and further removed from the citizens receiving and paying for the service. We have seen time and time again how the State has bungled its

opportunities to save money, miss deadlines and lose Federal money, cut services from one group in order to provide services to a larger population, thereby diluting services for everyone. The Governor's legislation looks like this model. Advisory parent boards do not come close to meeting the needs of local control. Without the power of decision making, power over the purse strings, and ownership, there is no local control.

EQUITY

The inequity in the size of these districts is irrational. Why is it reasonable to have 1 superintendent of a district of 1600 students and another for 20,000? There is nothing appealing about this. A problem I have heard no one talk about is the impact of this large consolidation will have that relates to No Child Left Behind. Currently, no school district in Maine is large enough to allow students in a failing high school or middle school to attend a different school of the parent's choice, except Portland. These mega districts will open up the right of parents to send their students from failing schools in the district to non-failing schools in the district because now there will be alternate schools from which to choose. The consolidation does not guarantee a failing school will instantly be a non-failing school. As a matter of fact, nationally, it is the large school districts that have the most difficulty meeting the challenges and requirements of No Child Left Behind. We have the potential to create more failing schools in Maine, not less.

WHERE DO WE GO

When the state decided to consolidate PSAPs it did not mandate the consolidation. Rather, the State decided it would no longer fund the current number of PSAPs and allowed the local jurisdictions who had a PSAPs to figure out for itself how it would reduce its number. Consolidation has taken place voluntarily. Before merging, entities explored a variety of options, selecting the one that worked best for their locality. The incentive for doing so was a loss of funding. That process is ongoing but there is a deadline. It is working!!

The State should not mandate consolidation but set parameters with the incentive being through the funding process. Both incentive and disincentives should be in the plan. For example, all K-8 districts must merge with a K-12 school system. Let that K-8 district decide where it wants to go and negotiate its own arrangements. Deadline for doing so and funding disincentives for failing to meet the deadline can be included.

Districts under 3000 students must merge with another district. Again, the merging parties select each other voluntarily. Deadlines are set by the state to accomplish this merger with funding disincentives for failure to meet deadlines both to the smaller entity and to entities that set the bar too high for accepting the smaller districts

CONCLUSION

There are several legislative plans on the table. I agree there needs to be change. I respectfully urge you to consider the following:

1. All school districts under 3000-3500 students voluntary select their merger partner(s).
2. Provide incentives and disincentives to merge; no mandates on how the mergers should take place.
3. Provide deadlines for accomplishing mergers.
4. Allow merger partners to determine how it will handle administrative duties, property ownership, debt service, labor agreements, leases, and other contracts for services, including legal, auditing, and any contracts or subcontracts for bus, maintenance and food services.

State of Maine
Testimony of the State Board of Education
February 5, 2007

Senator Rotundo, Representative Fischer, Senator Bowman, Representative Norton and distinguished members of the Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs and the Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs:

My name is Jim Carignan and I appear before you today to deliver testimony on behalf of the State Board of Education. The Board and I are appreciative of this opportunity to present our views at this time.

As most of you know, the State Board established a Select panel to address the needs in public education in the 21st century. A key recommendation of that report, "The Learning State: Maine Schooling in the 21st Century," is to create school districts ranging in size roughly in the 3000-4000 student population range. Districts larger than this would remain untouched, and this would produce roughly 60-65 districts—a significant reduction. Some of our recommendations are contained in a bill offered by Senator Rotundo, and we recommend it to you.

Maine faces a number of challenges and opportunities, but two stand out: the citizens' clarion call for tax relief and the URGENT need to insure that Maine children have the best education possible as they face the new and rapidly changing challenges of the 21st century. These two challenges are related. The tax picture in the future will depend in large measure on the capacity of Maine to grow its economy and increase personal income. A key factor in being able to do that is the quality of education that we offer our young people so that they have all the skills necessary to compete effectively in the global context. Tax relief and education are in some ways in tension, and how we balance them at this juncture will have much to say about our future—especially about the future of our children.

As your committees work to shape that balance, the State Board offers the following principles that we believe should guide your deliberations:

- After considerable study and extensive conversations with a variety of groups around the State, we are firmly convinced that there must be significant and major consolidation of school districts. There are multiple good reasons for being aggressive in this effort. Significant funds can be saved as long as the new districts are disciplined and preclude ballooning of staff at the middle management level. With a smaller number of districts, all of the PK-12, there will be greater coherency in curriculum and instruction. This is critical to insuring that there is equity for students across the State. Also, without prejudice to the current talented leadership, fewer districts hold the promise of producing consistently strong and effective leadership for students in Maine.
- The State Board firmly believes that significant resources captured from consolidation need to be redirected to students and the classrooms of Maine. The

changes that our students will face in the future are hard to imagine at this time, but we know that it will be a different world. It will be characterized by rapid change and the need for vastly more knowledge and skill than my generation required. This is an urgent matter. Therefore, the State Board urges you to guarantee that any student with financial need who seeks postsecondary education receives financial aid. It is time to put hard policy behind the rhetoric of postsecondary education as a requirement for success in this century. Further, we strongly recommend that one-to-one technology be made available to all students grades 7-12. Technology will be major driver of change in this century. Students who are comfortable with and accomplished with technology will have a leg up in this "flatter world" we experience.

- Whatever the final form consolidation takes, the State Board wishes to insure that communities stay connected to their community schools. Local Advisory Councils can be the vehicle which facilitates engagement and connection between the community and the school. Working with the principal and the staff, these Councils need to have sufficient authority and voice to affect decisions at the local and regional level.
- The State Board firmly believes the new structures needs to be in place by July, 2008. Much study has already been done. We need to move robustly to bring the new structures into existence. The study stage is over—it is time to implement with dispatch the decisions you make.
- Finally, the State Board recognizes the need for recapturing of tax funds as a part of any consolidation effort. Consequently, the Board supports the proposal, made by the Governor, that Maine classrooms move towards the national student-teacher ratio of 15.7:1 and pass this significant savings on to taxpayers.

The 21st century is upon us. Change is occurring at a rapid pace. The global economy and the flatter world change the dynamics of the context in which our young people will prosper or fail. If Maine citizens are to have a place in this "new world," then we must act now. The State Board strongly encourages you to lead us into this changed environment by bringing about consolidation, capturing funds for targeted investment in the PK-16 educational program in the State, recognizing the importance of local engagement, and acting now so that the changes can be in place by July 2008. We owe it to our citizens.

SCHOOL REGIONALIZATION

I am a 4 term board member from SAD 21, which consists of Dixfield, Peru, Canton and Carthage. I have for several years worked hard (without or little monetary compensation) for the education of our children. Two common beliefs in our district are we are here for the kids and all we do results in the best interest of the kids. Always keeping in mind my duty as a board member representing a town but who is also very considerate of all towns in the district in their ability to afford the cost of education. The town I represents is a town with a high mill rate of 29 mills due to very low business climate. Our budget is very frugal but we are able to sustain having a good reputation as a good district to send our children to be educated.

Our towns support education. But with the way the state's politics as gone in the past years the local taxpayer's burden has increased. Faced with an old Elementary building and an overcrowded Elementary building we acted by pursuing having Peru, a neighboring K-8 school who tuition their high school students out, to merge with SAD 21. It took a few years to iron out an agreement which were voted on by the towns involved and approved. We closed our Canton Elementary School and those students now go to Peru Elementary; which will close when our new state funded Elementary School is finished. We worked closely with Commissioner Gendron and the state board on this merger. The end results are we will have two aging building being closed, one Elementary will house our administrative offices and other needs we have in space currently being housed in portables and also the distribution of educational costs have broaden with the district's towns. That worked because our district as a whole has similar economic circumstances in our towns.

Plus for years we have been a member of a coalition for regionalizing purchases for items like oil, gas, computers, etc. There is a Western Maine Partnership which was formed for this reason. This is another way we have successfully regionalized costs. This was all done with the ability of local control.

The Legislative proposals are unrealistic, deceiving and will cause a major rift in the state of Maine with the "Haves versus the Have nots". Here are my major concerns:

1) LOCAL CONTROL-

With the proposed district we would unit with 10 other towns in the area which would combine three SADs. One of the districts would have a 46.1% of the population of the district, which is almost a 50% control over decision making. As you are aware we are already combined on our vocational center that is what the governor based his 26 districts on. That would be detrimental to our towns. For an example, we recently had in early winter a referendum on an addition and renovation project at our vocational school. Resulting in which our district as a whole voted no but with the number of the other districts votes being in the affirmative due to their size it passed. This project which is funded by local money with very little state contribution will now be the local taxpayer's burden. The town with the greatest financial burden is in our district. We knew this

would not be a positive impact on our future budget in two years just when our new state funded Elementary School is completed. That is an example of what would happen with the proposals. Our towns would not be able to have a significant say in our educational costs. One town's population in the proposed regionalization is triple the town I represent and they have a business economic climate. If you put districts with a good tax base with a district that doesn't, they will have a greater burden financially with virtually no say. One mill in one town is very different in another and who's to say this one board will consider the impact of a school budget on all towns not just their own. There will be no savings on property tax for us and we will have lost our control over them.

2) ADVISORY BOARDS-

Advisory boards for each school with no power are ineffectual and can not take the place of what your board for each district does. Your boards and superintendents are your educational leaders. Remember by law what the duties of a board are as policy makers. I take pride in the work I have done as a board member from being on the policy committee, negotiation committee, and design team, which oversees curriculum which is one of the most important duties board members have. I have watched in my tenure the funded and unfunded mandates that we have had to deal with that are financially draining and time consuming but I made that commitment. The proposed legislation is implying I have not done my job and there is no further need for my services... A school is not a business. It is our future.

3) SAVINGS FROM ONE SUPERINDENT-

That should be very easy to figure by comparing a large class A school and see how many administrators they have to run a district with a smaller district administrator's number. Our superintendent duty as educational leader is almost 24-7. From budget, curriculum, to negotiating, building project, etc there is not an enough time in the day. Increase that with more and you think there will be a savings? You will need others to help and since your duties have increased your salary will reflect that. Instead having just a superintendent, we will have assistants for every department and their salaries to contend with. Supposively, local funds that would have to pay for it because state EPS funding would not cover that. Your property taxes would if you were able to afford it. Have's and Have nots. That is not equitable opportunities for the students in the state of Maine.

4) CLASSROOM SIZE-

Increasing the student-teacher ratio to be able to decrease the amount of money a school gets on EPS formula is only passing the costs to the taxpayers who can afford it. (Have's and Have nots) The proposals say you can fund it locally if it is your choice. Again not equitable opportunities for our Maine students. It is passing the buck. The effect on the ability to hire qualified personal will come extremely difficult due to educators and kids who want to be in that field leaving the state for better opportunities. We are already losing them in other fields now we will lose more.

Enclosing-

I have many other concerns with the proposals like unrealistic timeline on achievement, impact on contracts and policies, and most important the fundamental change in how the state of Maine values education. As a board member I do problem solving in Negotiations and one of the ways to resolve an issue is you have to tell a story and I have done that. There are many stories all over the state. Please listen to them and you will see these proposals will not positively effect education in Maine or property tax in Maine equitably. Do not put the burden on the back of rural Maine.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Barbara Chow".

Barbara Chow
50 Webb River Drive
Dixfield Me 04224
Board Member/SAD 21

Testimony of Leo G. Martin
in support of LD 464
An Act to Reform Public Education by Encouraging Regional
Approaches

I'm Leo Martin, former Commissioner of Education under Governor McKernan, and before that a superintendent of Maine schools. I appear today on behalf of LD 464, Sen. Libby Mitchell's bill that incorporates the recommendations of *A Case for Cooperation*. This is the Maine Children's Alliance report on regional services that makes a compelling case for doing far more than we now do to share services and, in doing so, improve education. I served on the Advisory Board for the MCA Education Project, and was happy to do so.

This is an excellent report, and it goes into great detail about what's going on in our school now, chronicling both the successes and the failures. Mainers want all our children, and all our schools, to succeed. But the hard facts are that not all of our kids are getting the best opportunity to learn because not all of our schools are well equipped to teach them. The reasons vary, of course, but one reason that stands out in this report, close up, is that our extremely small district size and, in some cases, our small school sizes make it difficult to teach a comprehensive curriculum within a budget taxpayers can afford.

We have all heard a lot about consolidation of school districts and school administrators, and the financial imperatives for doing so in the wake of several attempts by referendum to cap state and local spending. We have also witnessed a lot of conflict between state and local officials on this subject, and this emerging conflict could really get in the way of achieving the progress we know we can accomplish in this legislative session.

Like several of my predecessors and successors as Commissioner of Education, I have been on both sides of this debate – as the superintendent of a local district, and, as the state's educational leader, trying to make policy that will suit all of our state's 290 school districts. This is not an easy task. Since we have only 200,000 students, grades K-12, our average district size is very small – and some of our school districts are tiny. Hard as it may be to believe, several dozen of these districts have school boards but no schools. The only job for these school boards is to arrange tuition and provide transportation.

When we live in a society that demands at least a high school diploma of every citizen, this is not a sustainable situation. We must urgently explore regional solutions, and ensure that local control is real control – that it puts school boards in charge of K-12 education for all the students in their towns, and not have them dealing merely with the frills of education. In some cases, this will mean consolidation into larger districts, but not in all cases. There are sometimes geographical and cultural factors that make consolidation difficult.



Since I've spent a good deal of time as a local official, including a stint as town manager, I can understand why local school districts feel that Augusta doesn't understand them. But in working on state and federal educational task forces, such as one recently convened by Sen. Olympia Snowe to study the No Child Left Behind Act, I can also understand why not every school district is really capable of meeting contemporary educational standards, both state and local. The struggle to complete the Learning Results, which were supposed to ensure proficiency by all students in many subject areas, is a case in point.

The conflict between state and local viewpoints is perhaps inevitable, but it is not insoluble. We must not let the passions of this sometime heated debate blind us to the fact that it is our children's education, not the sensibilities of any state or local official, that is paramount.

I would go back to *A Case for Cooperation*. Sometimes, conflict is easier than cooperation. It is easy to sit back, recite old slogans, and pretend that it's the other guy who needs to change, not us. In truth, we all need to change. We all need to maintain the flexibility to see that our current arrangements are not ideal, and we must be willing to change them – not just attack a plan with which we don't agree.

The road ahead for these two committees, and this Legislature, will not be an easy one as we seek to reform public education to improve learning and moderate per-pupil costs. It won't be easy for the planning alliances that this bill envisions, writing plans that will better serve students in every part of Maine.

But there is help. The tools this bill would create – new regional school districts, and support for educational cooperatives that can provide direct services – will be very useful indeed. Beefing up our construction program to replace, in an intelligent and efficient way, our aging high schools, is a vital incentive that can bring districts together. The plan you see before you in this bill is balanced between state and local, between educational quality and cost containment, between supplying both carrots and sticks in its incentives and requirements.

It offers a good guide to crafting policy that can revive and strengthen public education all over Maine. I urge you to consider it, and the other bills before you, carefully – and then act to ensure that the 21st century is an even better time for Maine education, and for the children who will be affected for years to come by your decisions.

Testimony of Jack Rosser
in support of LD 464,
An Act to Reform Public Education by Encouraging Regional Approaches

I'm Jack Rosser, and I chair the board of the Maine Children's Alliance, which is working with Sen. Libby Mitchell on behalf of our state's children through this piece of legislation.

I'm also an old hand at education reform bills. I don't like to say how many state boards and commissions I've served on, but there were a lot – and some of them actually did something. Some did a lot. A 1995 commission I chaired helped restore state aid to education after four years of flat funding -- no increase, even for inflation -- and set us on the way to the Essential Programs and Services system that is the basis for how we evaluate school finance today.

Before I describe what's in our bill and why we believe you should support it, I'd like to take a moment to describe why we are all here. And, more specifically, how we came to be here at this particular point in time.

History does not exactly repeat itself, but at times it comes darn close. It was just 50 years ago that this Legislature, under the leadership of Gov. Ed Muskie and a senator from Somerset County named Roy Sinclair, passed the biggest education reform bill this state had ever seen. It became known as the Sinclair Act, and it is still an inspiration for all those who believe in a regional, cooperative approach to serving our kids' educational needs.

The Sinclair Act produced the 64 multi-town SADs that still serve this state today. It led to a wave of school construction that produced consolidated schools all over Maine. And it committed the state to a major role in financing and evaluating local educational programs. It did this through incentives and through cooperation between the state and local school districts. It is a model for the kind of approach that still works today, and is perhaps more needed now than ever before.

Fifty years later, we have arrived at what we can call another "Sinclair Act Moment." There is broad concern that we can't afford the educational system we have today, that property taxes are too high and must come down. Student achievement in Maine may be flagging, and is certainly not growing at a rate that will keep us abreast of our peer states and our economic competitors abroad. Enrollment in K-12 grades is shrinking, and costs per student are going up.

The situation, as countless speakers today will remind you, is not sustainable. Many will say there's a tradeoff between quality education and lower costs, and another tradeoff between financial efficiency and local control. We don't agree. We think, through the implementation of this legislation and the statewide planning it creates, that we can have both better schools and more reasonable costs. We can have both efficiency and an enhanced sense of local control – true local control, and not just the smallest possible unit of government.

Fifty years after the Sinclair Act, a Maine Governor has outlined a bold plan for education reform. A senator from Somerset County – I'm referring to Peter Mills, who now sits on the Education Committee – is supporting our report, *called A Case for Cooperation*. He has his own bill that you're also hearing today, but we know he'll work together with us to create the best possible plan.



When we started this effort nearly two years ago, we didn't know what this session of the Legislature would bring. It wasn't popular to use the word "consolidation," and most people didn't think we could contain taxes with slashing government services. Nonetheless, Ellie Goldberg, the Maine Children's Alliance president, decided we should back Doug Rooks in his research project to find out if regional approaches could really work again in Maine.

We found out that they could. By sharing resources, aligning programs, and building new schools together, neighboring communities can dramatically improve school offerings while offering a better deal to taxpayers.

We also found that we were not alone. Soon, the State Board of Education was issuing its report, the Learning State, that advocated reduction of school districts from 290 to 35, and later to about 60. The Brookings Report also called for a dramatic reduction in administration costs, and asked for a state commission to draw new district boundaries. These three reports all make the same basic observation: Our school districts in Maine, which now have far fewer students than they did 30 years ago, are often too small to be financially efficient, and too small to offer a high-quality education to all their students.

The recommendations of the reports, however, are different. Some of the bills you are hearing call for a set number of districts, much smaller than the 290 we now have. Others would spend a year having a commission decide how many districts we need, and what their boundaries would be.

Our bill calls for a different approach than the other two reports, however. We believe that local communities, working regionally and with state oversight, can best do the job of promoting regional cooperation. We call for 26 planning alliances, not 26 school districts. The alliances will meet for a year and then submit a local – and regional – plan for approval. These plans will benefit from technical assistance from the state, and will represent the best ideas of the local community about how cooperation can take place. The plans would have to meet strict standards – for breadth of course offerings, for student achievement, and for administrative efficiency. This is not an exercise, but a broad-based effort to build a better educational system to serve our kids and our grandkids.

Only by allowing each level of government – state, local, and now regional – to do its job can we achieve success. The answer is not more mandates, not more rules and more arguments, but more cooperation to benefit our children. Under this legislation, the planning alliances will go out of business in 18 months. But we believe they can leave a legacy every bit as lasting as the Sinclair Act.

The public expects you to act, and we believe you will. We are also asking you to act wisely, to enlist cooperation from all sides, to think far into the future and, of course, to always focus on the children that it is our mission to serve.

PRESENTED by MARCIA McDAVID
LANGUAGE ARTS 6, 7, 8
JONESPORT ELEMENTARY
JONESPORT, MAINE

January 29, 2007

Dear Governor Baldacci,

My name is Andrew; I am a preacher's son. I go to Jonesport Elementary School, and I may not have many friends, but I do have the best teachers a student could hope for. I ask you, did you ever have teachers that you really appreciated and cared for? If you did, then thinking back, wouldn't you have done anything to make sure they were properly cared for for the students' sake? → Yes you Do! -

There is a most distressing matter at hand: the plan to seize our schools. I challenge your motives, and your authority in this situation. I also ask you, would you like to be challenged by every kid in Maine?

The kind of schools you plan for the state of Maine causes great concern:

- * Students will never know if the person next to them is using or selling drugs or any other substance
- * "One-on-one" help for students won't be possible with large classes
- * Traveling great distances puts students' lives in danger, particularly in the winter

I will pray for you, that you will make the decision that is best for our state and our state's students and not for the money that goes into the state's pocket.

Sincerely,

Andrew Bertrand

Andrew Bertrand

February 5, 2007

Joint Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs
Joint Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333-0100

Chairwoman Rotundo, Chairman Fischer, Chairman Bowman, Chairwoman Norton, and Distinguished Members of the Appropriations and Education Committees:

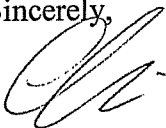
My name is Alan Cobo-Lewis, and I am from Orono. I am testifying Neither For Nor Against Part MM of LD 499.

I am the parent of a child with a disability, associate professor of psychology at the University of Maine, and co-chair of the Subcommittee to Study Early Childhood Special Education. I look forward to presenting on the Subcommittee's final report and accompanying legislation later this term and discussing the Subcommittee's strong recommendations that Maine keep a Birth-5 system not administered through K-12 school districts but with substantially improved interagency oversight, collaboration, and accountability. I have copies of the final report and bill available for those of you who would like more information ahead of time.

I thank Governor Baldacci and Commissioner Gendron for the Administration's decision to remove the language pertaining to Child Development Services from the school reorganization language in Part MM of the biennial budget bill. (My understanding is that the CDS language will be formally removed when the Administration submits its change package.) Distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee can rest assured that this carries **no negative fiscal implications**, as the Commissioner had previously acknowledged that the budget bill booked no savings from including CDS in the reorganization. It is a positive development that the Administration heeded the conclusions of the Subcommittee that including CDS in K-12 reorganization was inconsistent with our recommendations.

When you report out a bill on school structure, please ratify the Administration's current position and the position of the Subcommittee to Study Early Childhood Special Education **not to wrap Birth-5 services into K-12 reorganization**.

Sincerely,



Alan Cobo-Lewis, Ph.D.
19 Winterhaven Dr.
Orono, ME 04473
alanc@maine.edu

My legislative Testimony for Frenchboro Island

I stand before you today to offer a local
voice and opinion of LSRS or LD370

Our Education system in this state has never been perfect, but nobody or nothing is in reality; but we need to take our hats off to those directly involved with the field of education for their perseverance and dedication to always improve what does exist. As a mom of three young boys, a volunteer, the chair of our local school department I feel I have a pretty good insight to what has been working for the small island school in my community. I have a good relationship with my son's teachers, I volunteer just to be helpful, and I work extremely hard as a school board to see things holistically and real. As a mom I sit down with my sons every night read to them, play with them, and am teaching them to become life long learners. As a volunteer I dedicate my time daily and weekly to do projects, play games and teach gym class to the 13 students enrolled in school, but also the 19 kids in our growing community. I do all this because I care about other people and those are important qualities my kids will learn from me. As a school board member I help support the teachers, work with the teachers and administrators to establish a bare bones budget without depriving the children of the important things they need. In our small communities we make those dollars count because we stand up in front of the whole town saying we need "x" amount of dollars, and they have never questioned the budget process at all, or even the hundred thousand we ask them to raise in taxes. So, after reading this proposal I thought if I can pass a local school budget in this opinionated community without commentary why is the grief coming from the State level? I see you have a job to cut the state budget, but taking any funds away from education is the most ignorant way to go about this, even if it will supposedly save 240 million in three years. It's just like one of those buy one get one free coupons at the grocery store, and I urge you all to read the fine print before purchasing.

I also know that once you relinquish local control or voice from a small community school the support from the town will definitely dwindle. There are people in this great town that go to school music programs, art shows and many other things even though they don't have kids in the school. They like to support, they like to see where their money is going. If you put Frenchboro in a mega district with 36 other towns, 7,500 other students and a board of 9 members who will care and support my school then? I've personally worked too hard helping repopulate this island, establishing a good working relationship with our administration to have this all come tumbling down now. You will have the biggest fight of your lives if you think you can mandate to us what you think will work as you sit back in your chair in Augusta and leave us community members, parents, school boards, and teachers to pick up the broken pieces of your ludicrous consolidation plan.

Under the new legislation LSRS, Frenchboro would be put into region 7 which will consist of 36 schools and 7,500 students. It will change all local school boards we currently have that play vital roles in the schools and communities, and drastically cut our numbers into a range of 5 to 15. Honestly, in the 36 towns how well will Frenchboro be represented? Island life is truly a unique experience, our schools are different and our communities are eagerly watching our every move. Once the school boards change over, Frenchboro will become a little dot on the map, a school 40 +/- miles away that hosts "only" 13 students K-8 that is being told "no school will be closed under this proposal" to becoming too much work, maintenance and in the end not cost effective. No this is not part of the proposal but it IS realistic to what the regional boards will be faced with forcing our communities into sparring matches over whose school is most important to get the funds needed to function at the levels they need to provide quality education for our children. My community then will be forcing over half the population, the ones with children off island to relocate and find new jobs. What will happen to Frenchboro then? Without a school, there would be very few people, the post office would close, the commercial fisherman would be forced into minimum wage jobs on the mainland, if they find work at all, declining the economy in the entire state. Frenchboro, which is known for its famous lobster dinners, breathe-taking island cruises, a wonderful place to raise children, would become a decaying town with nothing to offer to families.

My community now currently has active parents, and community members that support local education by attending meetings and going to school functions regardless if they have children or not. The people in this community feel like they have ownership to what is here, and are proud for that. Frenchboro has fought a battle against all odds of becoming a school providing a quality education despite the isolation of 8.5 miles of wide-open ocean; they have always supported our school because they want to. However, taking away any voice or opinions they have will dramatically affect the support we currently are receiving.

I am urging you as my representative, my voice, to vote against this plan known as LSRS because of the negative impact it will have on my small community and many others just like it.

Sincerely,
Rebecca Lentestey

Rebecca Lentestey
PO Box 87
Frenchboro, ME 04635

To members of
Maine Legislative Education Committee
and
Maine Appropriations Committee

February 5, 2007

Testimony of
Henry R. Scipione, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools
York, Maine

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today. My name is Henry Scipione and I am the Superintendent of Schools in York. I am here to share my perspective on the regionalization proposals put forward today. You have a very difficult decision ahead of you as you will decide on the best course of action to insure that that quality education exists for every student in Maine while addressing the concern about educational costs.

As you know, the numerous reports that have been mentioned today and those called upon in defense of the proposed regionalization models all speak to the cost of educational administration in Maine. I am not here to advocate for the status quo for I believe that administrative consolidation should occur within our state. I am here to say that I believe the Governor's plan may accomplish his goal of cost savings but it does so at a far greater cost. That cost is the quality of education our students receive in Maine.

Change in school administrative structure in Maine is needed. There are efficiencies and cost-saving measures that can be put into place without impacting the quality of education Maine students receive. The quality of education York and other students receive will be significantly impacted if the Governor's plan is enacted. I believe the Governor's plan will have the effect of increasing the resources provided to some students in Maine while decreasing those resources to other children. His plan will create equity through the Robin Hood effect...taking from the rich and giving to the poor. In this case York will likely be supplementing the educational costs in other communities while decreasing the resources available to our

children. I firmly believe that every child in Maine should have equal opportunity to learn and should have the resources to achieve. I also believe it is the responsibility of every community to provide quality education. The Governor's plan removes local control and responsibility by creating a regional system and eliminating all local school boards. This has the effect of shifting the responsibility of funding education from one community to another. I feel this is fundamentally wrong.

York has a long history of supporting our schools and has provided necessary support for our children. As a result there have been sacrifices made in York for the purpose of supporting education. These sacrifices have resulted in a strong, effective and efficient school system: a system that focuses on the individual student and provides the support for each student to succeed. I fear the Governor's plan would compromise the ability of York Schools to continue to achieve excellence.

I believe the Governor's plan is poorly conceived and places our children at significant risk. This is a drastic change that has come without participation from any constituent group in Maine. I am shocked by the manner in which this plan has emerged and how it is now proceeding through the legislature at an unprecedented rate. The York School Committee and the York Board of Selectmen have strongly voiced their objection to this plan.

I believe we, as educators, parents, community members and legislators, have a moral imperative to consider the decisions we make based on the impact those decisions have on each and every child in Maine. We cannot increase resources for some students while decreasing opportunities for others; all under the guise of equity. We must move forward with the commitment that the plan we put in place will not compromise any child. We have that responsibility and we have that obligation. We all want to do what is best for our children. Let us join together in that spirit to insure the decisions we make support each and every child in Maine.

Thank you.

To: Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs

From: Deborah Rideout, Administrative Assistant to the Superintendent
Scarborough School Department

Date: February 5, 2007

Re: Opposition Testimony for LSRS - The Governor's Plan

Hello, my name is Deborah Rideout and I am the Administrative Assistant to the Superintendent in Scarborough.

I have come here today to put a face on the countless support staff who are employed in central offices. Many of these people stand to lose their jobs under the Governor's redistricting plan. They are not covered by a union so their jobs are not protected nor will they receive any severance pay. They will simply find that their positions have been phased out. Will the Governor step in and see that jobs are available to them? I highly doubt it. School district's central offices aren't like a major factory where many people are employed in one place.

How will this come about? Regionalized units will have to hire one Superintendent and one administrative assistant. In district 24, which would consist of Scarborough, Westbrook, Gorham, Windham, Buxton, Frye Island, Hollis, Limington, Standish, and Raymond, at least five or more administrative assistants will be vying for one position. The "one" person who lands the job will probably be grateful that they are able to continue in education; however, the others will be looking for jobs in the private sector. In southern Maine that probably won't be a problem, but what about those people in the other areas where jobs are not as plentiful? Who is going to help them and where will they be able to find another position?

However, it's not just administrative assistants who will be affected by this. All, I repeat all, central office support staff will be affected in the same way. The personnel who work as payroll and billing clerks; special education, curriculum, and facilities secretaries will face a similar fate. As districts are collapsed into regionalized units, decisions will be made that impact these peoples' livelihood. Will it take more than one person to do payroll for 2,800 people? The answer is yes. But will it mean that there are enough positions available for all the people currently doing payroll, the answer is probably "no." And so it will go for all the other support positions.

And who gets to decide who continues to work? Does the district that has the "vocational center" immediately get to keep their support staff and any other district's support staff have to vie for what else is available? Or is everyone's file reviewed, they are interviewed, and they are ultimately offered a position by the new regional Superintendent. For some this won't be an issue because these regionalized units are quite far apart and the commuting distance might not be feasible. Others, who are older and in a position to do so, may simply file for retirement.

Whatever the reason, support staff will be whittled down and additional Mainers will be added to the unemployment list. Will the regionalized unit be paying for their unemployment and will those same people be added to Maine's Dirigo Health plan because they won't have any health insurance?

In closing I would like to say that after more than 23 years, I feel totally unappreciated for all the dedicated service I have given to education in Maine.... And I ask the Committee to carefully scrutinize the Governor's proposal and see how much harm it will bring to individual workers and students in Maine.

District Consolidation Testimony
Becky Roper
PO Box 203
Whitefield, ME 04353

February 5, 2007

Thank you for offering me a chance to testify concerning the school district consolidation. I wish to address the consolidation wearing three hats, the assistant to the principal hat, the teacher hat, and most importantly the parent hat.

First, I recently took on the role of assistant to the principal. As I do not have my assistant principal certificate I cannot suspend students or evaluate staff. I sit as acting administrator in my principal's few, but necessary absences. In filling this role I have needed my superintendent or assistant superintendent to come sign paperwork to suspend children who have attacked other students. My superintendent has also counseled me in handling volatile situations with potentially dangerous people entering the school. I wonder how one superintendent will help assure the safety of the students in not only my school, but of the schools in over twenty towns.

I attended the Women's Pathways to Leadership conference at Colby college this Saturday. The dearth of women in leadership roles was bemoaned, and the advice of all the presenters, including the commissioner of education, was to find a good support network. How exactly will I find support in a superintendent who will be stretched from Fayette to Jefferson? How will one superintendent effectively supervise and evaluate all the administrators to assure quality leadership in all schools?

The second hat I put on is as a teacher. When I started teaching, the Learning Results were just entering the scene. I joined the committees led by the assistant superintendent to create a curriculum for our union. The after school hours and weekend work looking at curriculum seemed worthwhile because I wanted a voice in what I would be expected to teach. What will happen to this work with a consolidation?

Our superintendent and assistant superintendent have acted as buffers between the state and the school. They do a remarkable job jumping through the hoops to follow the state mandates. Will the one superintendent presiding over more than twenty- two towns be able to provide the same buffer? Or will the administrator and teachers be filling in that role?

How will one superintendent covering from Fayette to Jefferson develop a positive relationship with the at-risk student population, helping to keep them in school? Our superintendent works to keep disenfranchised kids and their families invested in their education. Who will take this work on? How can one superintendent ever have the time to understand the varied needs of the students most at risk of failing? My students see our superintendent and assistant superintendent in our school at least once or twice a week. How will one superintendent maintain this visibility?

My final, and most important hat is that of mother. My oldest son is beginning kindergarten in the fall. I want him to attend a small school where all the staff know him. I want his class size to be small. The ESP ratio of teacher to student should include classroom teachers only, as art teachers will not host a kindergarten homeroom, at least not yet. I do not want his teachers burdened with greater expectations from the state because the buffer they once depended on has disappeared. My hope for my son is that

his teacher will be accountable for a rigorous curriculum, but that the teacher will retain the autonomy to teach to the unique assets of that particular class. I want his classmates with extraordinary needs to have access to the superintendent to assure their needs will be met. I do not want my son to be forced into a mega-school simply because some expert has declared it efficient. Children are not commodities to be traded on the whim of political leaders.

Everything I read declares that consolidation is not an if or even a when, it is a done deal. I hope the seemingly impossible time table allows the powers that be to consider and prepare for not only the questions I've asked but that of all the teachers, parents, and principals. Thank you for this opportunity to speak.



Local Schools, Regional Support Testimony February 5, 2007

Presented to the State of Maine's
Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs
and
The Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs
by
Maryann Minard, Ph.D., Curriculum Coordinator York School Department

My name is Maryann Minard and I am the K-12 Curriculum Coordinator for the York School Department. I have spent 33 years working in education, 21 of them as a public school elementary teacher. I have taught students from kindergarten through graduate students, from special education children to gifted children in my classrooms. I have had the good fortune to work in many different locations during my career, due mostly to my husband's Air Force career. I have worked in districts that exceeded 100,000 students in size, and I have worked in districts with as few as 900 students. I have served the New England Association of Schools and Colleges for eleven years, as a Commissioner for Public Elementary and Middle Schools and currently as a Commissioner for American and International Schools Abroad. I state this, so that you can see that my perspective is a broad one and that my pride in being a Maine educator for fifteen years at this point in my career is deep. Maine's student achievement is strong; Maine's commitment to doing the right things for our students is what makes us stand out. We have resisted high stakes tests, we have argued compellingly with Federal officials over NCLB and we have stood proud and won the approval for using the SAT as a measure of student achievement. So, I am indeed proud to be a Maine educator.

I ask you as legislators to demand an exact financial accounting for the savings that the LSRS proposal states will occur because of regionalization. And I ask you to balance those numbers with the costs that will be exacted in the effectiveness of our system of education. We live in complex times. Times when education has never been more important. Times when home and family are experiencing unprecedented stresses. Our children mirror those stresses, and often reflect the problems that our American and global societies face each day. By the time a child graduates from a Maine high school, she will have spent only 10% of her life in school. Our school system must maintain a close, personal connection with students and with their families. We need to partner closely with our parents, be accessible to them and be responsive to their needs. With local school systems, we are accountable to our communities; we are educational leaders who can be active, involved and recognized in our towns.

I speak from my experience when I say that the most effective school systems I have had the opportunity to work in, and with through NEASC, have all been school systems that have 3,000 students or less. The school/community partnership that we speak of so often has to be of a manageable size to make it personalized and to allow educators, parents and children to share the common vision of what education means to them in their communities.

Commissioner Gendron refers to Fairfax County VA as a model of an effective mega-district. Fairfax County is a high achieving district, but it comes with a price tag that is hefty. I would like to point out that the per pupil expenditure in Fairfax County in the 2007 year is \$12,917, that is \$2,772 higher than the FY 07 per pupil expenditures in Maine. Excellence has a price tag that cannot be ignored. Fairfax County has an administrative staff that certainly is extensive.

Their structure includes:

- Superintendent.
- Deputy Superintendent
- Division Counsel,
- Assistant Superintendents for:
 - Accounting
 - Facilities and Transportation
 - Financial Services
 - Human Resources
 - Information Technology
 - Instructional Services,
 - Professional Learning and Training

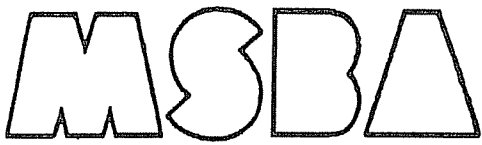
Each of these individuals has a staff under them, including administrative support personnel. Additionally, each grouping of two to four high schools and their feeder schools called "pyramids" have cluster leaders- led by an Assistant Superintendent for each cluster and two Special Education administrators per cluster. Each of these clusters also has administrative staff. With adequate staffing, and pay scales that reflect the sizeable responsibilities, Fairfax County runs efficiently, but impersonally. Reading Specialist Jane Canny sees her superintendent only in huge assemblies, sometimes in sessions that are televised to teachers and says that parents interact with even the cluster level personnel in only rare instances other than special education meetings.

Please look very carefully at the Governor's proposal that states it will reduce Central Office staff by 50% and determine how that will play out in reality. Look carefully at the information you are bring given. You must be responsible researchers and consumers of information, measuring every piece of information you are given. You must verify every fact, because certainly some facts have not been presented in their entirety. This proposal was developed quickly, and it appears that some details may be glaringly missing. Last Thursday, an article appeared on the maine.gov website. It was showcased as the top headline on the site, and still was last evening. It declared "Report Shows Support for District Consolidation." It goes on to report a survey conducted of 500 Maine residents with a majority favoring the governor's proposal. Later in the article, the Informational Sessions hosted throughout the state are mentioned, but nowhere in the article does it report on the fact that these sessions brought out over a thousand citizens who spoke clearly and passionately against this proposal. That does not appear to be an unbiased report that is being communicated as clear fact to citizens

who log on to maine.gov. My concern is that there are other facts missing and it falls squarely upon your shoulders to seek the answers that may not be easy to determine.

The decisions you will make, the bill you bring forth to the legislature, will have a profound impact on Maine's future. Please be certain that you have all the facts and that the facts include the true cost- in dollars and cents, and in the price we will pay if we move to mega-districts that will make our school systems more impersonal when the need to reach out in personal ways to families and children have never been greater. Our families and our children need community. Our children need a K-12 experience that is cohesive and connected. That takes visionary, effective and strong leadership that is coordinated and concentrated, not diluted by being spread too thin over a large geographical region with responsibility for, in some cases, nearly 18,000 to 20,000 students.

Thank you for your attention, and I wish you wisdom as you dedicate the days ahead to creating a plan that will work for our children.



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Testimony Regarding Legislative Proposals
Relative to School Administrative Unit
Consolidation and Other Related Issues

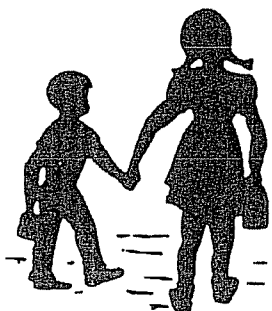
Senator Bowman, Representative Norton, Senator Rotundo, Representative Fisher and members of the Joint Standing Committees on Education and Cultural Affairs and Appropriations and Financial Affairs, I am Kim Bedard, President of the Maine School Boards Association (MSBA) and a member of the Kittery School Committee. I appear before you today representing the Board of Directors of MSBA.

Let me begin by saying that the Maine School Boards Association is committed to the efficient and cost effective delivery of high quality educational services to Maine's students. We are proud of Maine's schools and the quality of education they are providing to Maine's students. Although Maine is a relatively poor state, our students are performing above the national averages and our rate of high school graduation is above the national norm. We recognize that our students must continue to improve.

We also recognize that Maine taxpayers' dollars must be spent wisely. Toward this end, we as an association applaud and support efforts to make our school systems more efficient through interlocal cooperation, regionalization of specific administrative functions and educationally appropriate consolidation of school administrative units. We recognize that Maine faces serious challenges due to its high property tax burden, its geography, its large number of relatively small schools, and its projected declines in student enrollment.

We believe that the voters' rejection of the Palesky and TABOR initiatives, tells us two things. Yes, Maine voters want to reduce their property taxes, but No, Maine voters do not want to do so in an arbitrary or formula-driven manner that creates more problems than it solves. We believe that faced with these serious challenges, provided with accurate data, and presented with carefully developed choices, Maine people will make the right decisions for our communities and this State.

For that reason we believe that proposals for cooperation, regional service delivery and school consolidation must be based on the following principles:



Member of THE MAINE EDUCATION LEADERSHIP CONSORTIUM

49 COMMUNITY DRIVE • AUGUSTA, MAINE 04330

Phone: 207-622-3473 • Fax: 207-626-2968 • Website: www.msmaweb.com

1. The goal must be to deliver excellence in education in a cost-effective manner;
2. The plans for achieving greater efficiencies must be based on accurate data and appropriate study and must include options for cooperation, regional service delivery and educationally appropriate school consolidation;
3. The process for developing these initiatives must be broadly inclusive so that all stakeholders can be heard and their ideas considered; the regional planning groups should have representation from each of the current school boards as well as municipal government representatives, in addition to administrators, other educators, parents and other citizens. While some may argue that this will make the regional groups too large, we believe that broad participation will enhance the work;
4. The process must allow sufficient time to develop and implement the plans;
5. There must be adequate public input throughout the process;
6. This committee should not predetermine a “magic number” of school administrative units. The number should grow out of the planning process and take into account both local and regional needs;
7. The resources of the Department of Education must be available to assist the planning groups in their work; and
8. The proposed plans must stand the test of local voter approval.

Applying these principles to the plans currently before this Committee, we believe that the Governor’s proposal fails each test.

- The projected savings in the Governor’s plan are not real; they are based on arbitrary and unsupported assumptions, and have failed to consider many off-setting costs.
- The process for developing the Governor’s proposal has been deeply flawed. The proposal was developed by a handful of people with no stakeholder input. It has badly strained the levels of trust between the Department and Maine’s school officials; this is exactly the way not to do things;
- The time frames in the Governor’s proposal has been too short to develop a sound plan or to provide for an appropriate transition;

- The plan is unfair to long-term school employees whose jobs will be terminated with no severance;
- The Governor is asking you to eliminate all of Maine's existing units of school governance with no opportunity for a local vote at the community level.

Please take this unsound proposal off the table.

With respect to the other plans which are before you, we believe that many contain ideas that could form the basis for a constructive, data driven and responsible process to achieve greater efficiencies in the delivery of educational services. We believe that regional groups to develop plans for cooperation, regional provision of services, and educationally appropriate school consolidation are a good idea. We believe that such planning groups could develop proposals and submit them to local voters on a timetable that would demonstrate that the Legislature is serious about addressing the concerns which were raised by the Palesky and TABOR initiatives.

We believe we can help to solve these problems if only we are asked to come to the table to assist in the development of options that can be made available to our local school systems and communities. And that is where we now need to start. Maine people, their elected school boards, superintendents, other school personnel, and municipal officials have the capacity, experience and skill to develop sound plans that local voters will consider and approve. MSBA urges you to look at all of the bills before you, at the relevant reports available to you, and then to craft new legislation that honors our diversity, geography, history and future needs so that whatever is finally put forward has broad public support and represents sound public policy.

MSBA would welcome the opportunity to work with this committee and the other interested parties to help inform your deliberations and assist with the next steps in this process.

Molly Ross
Belfast Area High School
Social Studies Teacher, parent, taxpayer
February 5, 2007

To the Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs and to the Appropriations Committee,

Thank you for the chance to speak today. I come before you to plead for the future of Maine's schools and Maine's children. The "Local Schools, Regional Support" (LSRS) proposal is not an educational reform; it is merely a political appeasement, a cost-cutting measure that caters to TABOR and other supporters of property tax relief. What makes LSRS particularly heinous is that the cost of this catering will be borne by our children.

From the manner in which it has been constructed to the manner in which it is being rammed through legislative channels, this proposal is characterized by immense philosophical and practical difficulties. Commissioner Gendron and Governor Baldacci have promoted this legislation without thinking about its application or its implementation; in the absence of real ideas, they seem satisfied with appearing to concern themselves with tax relief.

The implications of their proposal are nightmarish. Dissolution of locally elected school boards, regional negotiations and contracts, and funneling money back to taxpayers – when one starts to consider how to actually DO IT, there are hundreds of constitutional, legal, and physical obstacles. Do we want a state that can dictate class size, curricula, and programs? Do we want a state that will force locally elected bodies to disband? Do we want to hand over our local facilities to a new "Super Board" that may or may not have our representative on it?

Under Baldacci's plan, Belfast Area High School will be incorporated into Region #11 with the Searsport and Mount View districts. There are twenty towns in Region #11, so with the 15 member maximum on the "Super Board" there are at least 5 towns in our region that would not have representation, and that's assuming that some towns will NOT get more than one representative based on population. Such a lack of representation is not only unacceptable, it's also un-American.

Mount View's community and taxpayers have just approved the building of a new school to replace that district's many modular classrooms. Yet, under LSRS, decisions about policy, staffing, and curricula in that new school could be made by people outside their current district, people in Frankfort, Belmont, and Northport, for example. There will be one regional budget, one regional set of negotiations for staff and one regional set of guidelines for spending, yet our local debt will stay "local." Does this make sense to you? It doesn't to me.

I also do not trust this administration's educational ideology. The LSRS would lead to a State Curriculum, a State Class-Size Policy, and a State Contract for Teachers and Superintendents, basically, a Big Brother State. Given this administration's track record with state educational mandates, I doubt its ability to effectively implement LSRS. Consider the LAS (Chapter 127), for example. Two years ago, I and over 50

other educators around the state spoke to you about the negative impact this program was having on our schools. We pointed out its inefficiencies, its lack of clarity, and its damaging effect on students. Last year, a moratorium was put on this program. Commissioner Gendron then hired an \$80,000 consultant to study the LAS plan. He just recently released his report; the plan was deemed inefficient, unclear, and harmful to students. In a January 30th article by Victoria Walleck, Commissioner Gendron admits, "We tried to design a system that was unrealistic" and she now advocates the permanent repeal of this LAS assessment fiasco.

In a related matter, the administration's "reform" of the Department of Health and Human Services led to millions of dollars being overspent, misplaced, and mismanaged. In SAD #34 (Belfast), the state's overpayment of Medicaid funds, followed by a call for their return, only added to the confusion arising out of our \$840,000 deficit. Governor Baldacci and Commissioner Gendron failed to demonstrate that they can professionally, competently, and effectively reform statewide services and thus should not be allowed to pursue the intent of LSRS.

In closing, I must admit to a cynical side. I believe that the members of the Baldacci administration do not truly believe that the LSRS will succeed. They have not based their recommendations on best education practices. Their time frame does ^{not} permit a thoughtful, thorough discussion to occur. The fact that LSRS is inserted into the budget puts the onus on the legislature: if you remove it, you will inherit the fiscal responsibility that remains. You will have to balance the budget, leaving the governor free to claim that he tried. In this way he can avoid wrestling with the real problem: the connection between property taxes and public education in the State of Maine..

I am sincerely grateful for your time and attention.

2/5/07 Public Discussion-Proposed Restructuring of K-12 Education into 26 Mega Regions

It was a pleasure to read the article in the "Maine View" regarding Education Service Districts. For many years I have followed the funding of education as I am a retired business and economics faculty member.

Yes, it is important for various individual K-12 schools throughout Maine to share common administrative costs to hold down taxes. I agree that the current 26 "Regional Centers" proposal will not save the expected money as projected. **However, I noted that the proposal of Education Service Districts only mentions two types of school governances working together: "A" multiple combined municipalities served by a combined School Administrative District (SAD) and "B" individual Municipal School Board.**

Note that throughout Maine, many of the smaller towns are administered by School Unions and/ or Consolidated School Districts (CSD's). Note that within a School Union, each town or municipality is an independent entity which means that they reflect both individual revenues and expenditures. This allows them to share common administrative costs with other respective towns in a School Union on a head count bases. Within a SAD, there is no fair way to share educational costs between member towns since a SAD is an independent entity. Note a formula must be decided upon by all member towns to share the additional local needed money. Note that there often exist extreme differences between property valuation and number of students between member towns. The number of towns in the proposed 26 mega regions will enhance the problem. Currently all towns and municipalities regardless of governance, within Maine, are responsible to pay a fixed mill rate to lever State funding. For the current 2006-07 school year, the required mill rate is 7.6 mills. The overall mill rate and specifically the property taxes paid by business will be affected if the proposed property tax cap is implemented on year-round Maine residential homes.

Note a SAD either encourages the operation of excess K-8 schools to appease tax payers or closing specific-excess K-8 schools to appease taxpayers which pits communities against each other.

Also note that the previous EPS (Essential Programs and Services) funding formula, the current 26 Regional Center proposal and the Service District proposal do not address the current inconsistency of placing a cap on 9-12 tuition (the lesser of State average cost or individual school cost) and not a cap on K-8 tuition. How will this situation be corrected?

Therefore, it seems that a solution would be to do away with all of the existing governing school units and replace them with municipal K-8 schools and encourage area schools to work together in sharing common administrative costs along with either area municipal high schools and/or CSD high schools. CSD high schools seem to work since only four grades are involved. K-8 municipal schools allow all of the individual Maine towns to determine if they want to operate their own respective school or tuition their respective students to another area school. As stated above, the amount charged for tuition should have the same rules for K-8 and 9-12; either, a cap on both or no cap on either.

Richard C. Larson
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Maine School Superintendents Association

"Better Schools for Maine Students"

TESTIMONY REGARDING LEGISLATIVE PROPOSALS RELATIVE TO SCHOOL ADMINISTRATIVE UNIT CONSOLIDATION AND OTHER RELATED ISSUES

FEBRUARY 5, 2007

SENATOR BOWMAN, REPRESENTATIVE NORTON, SENATOR ROTUNDO, REPRESENTATIVE FISCHER, AND MEMBERS OF THE JOINT STANDING COMMITTEES ON EDUCATION AND CULTURAL AFFAIRS AND APPROPRIATIONS AND FINANCIAL AFFAIRS, MY NAME IS LARRY LITTLEFIELD AND I AM THE IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT OF THE MAINE SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS ASSOCIATION (MSSA) AND SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS IN KITTERY. I AM HERE TODAY REPRESENTING THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF MSSA.

DUE TO THE FACT THAT THERE ARE SEVERAL PIECES OF LEGISLATION THAT ADDRESS THE SUBJECT OF CONSOLIDATION AND THESE WERE NOT ALL AVAILABLE TO US, WE HAVE CHOSEN TO OFFER GENERAL COMMENTS AND WHERE APPROPRIATE, MORE SPECIFIC POSITIONS.

OUR ASSOCIATION HAS ALWAYS SUPPORTED EFFORTS FOR COLLABORATION, REGIONALIZATION, AND CONSOLIDATION. THERE ARE NUMEROUS SUCCESSFUL REGIONAL COLLABORATIONS CURRENTLY OPERATING THROUGHOUT THE STATE. MSSA IS READY TO JOIN WITH YOU, THE GOVERNOR AND OTHERS TO WORK TOWARDS SPECIFIC PLANS TO HELP US REACH THE NEXT LEVEL OF REGIONALIZING AND CONSOLIDATING.

FIRST, WE GO ON RECORD AS OPPOSING GOVERNOR BALDACC'S CONSOLIDATION PLAN AS CONTAINED IN THE DRAFT BUDGET DOCUMENT. OUR ASSOCIATION FINDS THIS PROPOSAL TO BE TOO EXTREME, TOO FAST, TOO TOP DOWN AND BASED ON UNSUBSTANTIATED PROJECTED SAVINGS. FURTHERMORE, NO SUCH SERIOUS MAKEOVER OF MAINE'S EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM SHOULD BE DONE WITHOUT THE OPPORTUNITY FOR INPUT FROM THOSE

AFFECTED AND FROM MAINE'S CITIZENS WHOSE LOCAL CONTROL WOULD BE OBLITERATED.

MSSA JOINS WITH THE MAINE SCHOOL BOARDS ASSOCIATION IN ASKING YOU TO TAKE THE GOVERNOR'S PROPOSAL OFF THE TABLE AND WORK WITH THE VARIOUS CONSTITUENCIES WHOSE COLLECTIVE CONTRIBUTIONS CAN HELP SHAPE A RESPONSIBLE PLAN THAT RECOGNIZES THE DIVERSITY OF OUR STATE AND HONORS ITS VALUES AND TRADITIONS.

MSSA SUGGESTS THAT THE FOLLOWING ARE CRITICAL ELEMENTS IN ACHIEVING ANY SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION OF A CONSOLIDATION PLAN:

- A CLEAR GOAL. THE PURPOSE OF A "COLLABORATION, REGIONALIZATION, CONSOLIDATION" (CRC) INITIATIVE SHOULD BE TO DELIVER EDUCATIONAL SERVICES IN A COST EFFICIENT MANNER WHILE FOSTERING EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE, EDUCATIONAL EQUITY, ADEQUACY, AND IMPROVED STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT.
- CAREFUL PLANNING. CRC INITIATIVES SHOULD BE BASED ON SOUND DATA, CAREFUL ANALYSIS, AND THOROUGH STUDY WITH CONSIDERATION OF THE IMPACTS ON STUDENTS, TAXPAYERS AND LOCAL COMMUNITIES.
- AN INCLUSIVE PROCESS. THE PROCESS FOR DEVELOPING CRC INITIATIVES AT ALL LEVELS SHOULD BE BROADLY INCLUSIVE WITH PARTICIPATION BY PARENTS, COMMUNITY MEMBERS, ELECTED OFFICIALS, SCHOOL OFFICIALS, BUSINESS AND CIVIC LEADERS, THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND OTHERS.
- ALIGNMENT OF GOVERNANCE AND SERVICES. THERE SHOULD BE A CLOSE ALIGNMENT BETWEEN SCHOOL GOVERNANCE STRUCTURES AND THE DELIVERY OF EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS IN ORDER TO MAINTAIN BROAD PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR PUBLIC EDUCATION IN MAINE.
- STATE'S SUPPORTING ROLE. THE STATE'S ROLE WITH RESPECT TO SCHOOL CRC INITIATIVES SHOULD BE TO PROVIDE SUPPORT FOR PLANNING EFFORTS, TO REMOVE BARRIERS TO REGIONAL COOPERATION AND TO CREATE INCENTIVES FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF CAREFULLY PLANNED CRC INITIATIVES. AT THE SAME TIME, THE STATE SHOULD ADDRESS ISSUES THAT HAVE LEAD TO THE WITHDRAWALS FROM AND DISSOLUTION OF SEVERAL SAD'S. THE STATE SHOULD NOT TAKE OVER THE DELIVERY OF EDUCATIONAL SERVICES IN MAINE OR MANDATE THE CONSOLIDATION OF SCHOOL UNITS WITHOUT VOTER APPROVAL.
- LOCAL APPROVAL AND IMPLEMENTATION. CRC INITIATIVES SHOULD BE RESPONSIVE TO LOCAL CONDITIONS AND APPROVED AND IMPLEMENTED AT THE LOCAL LEVEL.

PLEASE KNOW THAT MEMBERS OF THE MSSA WANT TO PLAY A ROLE IN ASSISTING YOU TO DEVELOP A PLAN THAT MAKES SENSE FOR MAINE, AND

ENHANCES EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR STUDENTS. WE BELIEVE THAT THERE ARE MANY POSITIVE SUGGESTIONS CONTAINED IN THE VARIOUS REPORTS THAT ADDRESS CONSOLIDATION AND WE ARE READY TO WORK WITH YOU AND OTHERS TO CRAFT PLANS, DEVELOP OPTIONS, AND SECURE LOCAL SUPPORT FOR SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION.

Testimony regarding legislative proposals relative to school administrative unit consolidation:

February 5, 2007

Senator Bowman, Representative Norton, Senator Rotundo, Representative Fischer and members of the Joint Standing and Legislative Committees on Educational and Cultural Affairs and Appropriations and Financial Affairs:

My name is Helene Cass. I am a 14 year member of the MSAD 35 Board of Directors and have served as Board Chair for the past 12 years. MSAD 35 serves the towns of Eliot and South Berwick.

Since the public has become aware of the consolidation plan included in Governor Baldacci's budget, I have attended three public forums on this issue. I have listened, along with hundreds of other individuals, to repeated assertions of "unfairness", expressions of anger, and great concern for both lack of local control and, most importantly, the quality of education for the children of Maine.

MSAD 35 has historically, and continues to be, a school district of low per-pupil costs; we have often been ranked toward the bottom of districts by per pupil spending and remain below the state's EPS spending model. Our local tax rates are low, our student achievement is high and our administrative costs are low. Commissioner Gendron asserted the current consolidation proposal would seek to reduce administrative costs within school districts to approximately \$190 per pupil; our current administrative costs are approximately \$145 per pupil.

As a long term Board member, I understand that any new policy, regardless of its merit, will be "unfair" to some individual or group. As John F. Kennedy once said, "Life is unfair." However, it is our responsibility as elected officials, no matter at what level of government, to do our best to create intelligent, well-researched, carefully thought out policies that truly benefit our citizens. Such policies must serve a constructive and positive purpose and be embraced by the majority of stake holders. The policy and its components must always pass the often-referred to, but seldom applied, test of common sense. I do not believe the current proposal placed before you meets any of these universal requirements.

In preparing for this testimony, I was very surprised to come upon a document entitled, *The Learning State: Maine Schooling for the 21st Century*, commissioned by the State Board of Education Select Panel on Revisioning Education in Maine. This document, I was surprised to note, was dated September 12, 2006, four short months ago. The document recommends

- a reduction in the number of school districts,
- the redistricting to be decided by a diverse group representing the stakeholders, and

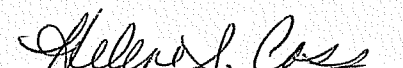
---districts that serve the optimal and efficient number of 3000-4000 students be created, while allowing school districts at or near that size to remain intact. Specifically, the documents states:

“The number of SAU’s will be reduced dramatically from the current 286. A bipartisan Redistricting Panel representative of the State’s diverse geography will be appointed (two members—one Republican, one Democrat—each by the Governor, the Senate President, the Speaker of the House, a member of the State Board of Education, two representatives of the MSMA, a representative of the MMA, and a Teacher of the Year chosen by the MEA) to redraw district lines so that each district will serve 3000-4000 students (current districts of this size or larger will remain intact). Districts will be in two forms—municipalities or SAD’s. In doing their work the Redistricting Panel will give priority to retaining community integrity, current district integrity, transportation issues, etc. The plan submitted to the Legislature will receive an up or down vote, but not be subject to amendment.”

The conclusions of the select panel DO meet the fundamentals requirements of good policy. I ask you to carefully consider the recommendations our own state Board of Education, issued only four months ago.

In closing, I ask you to carefully and thoughtfully ask yourself a question that has always successfully guided our school board in making difficult decisions: “What is best for our children?” When we have carefully and thoughtfully conceived an answer that ensures both the short term and long term welfare of our children, we have ultimately balanced both the needs of our children with the concerns of our citizens.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I implore you to use both your intelligence and commons sense in developing a plan that will serve our citizens and children as well as honor the proud and effective Maine legacy of local control.


Helene S. Cass, Chair
MSAD 35 Board of Directors

20 Prides Crossing
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February 5, 2007

123rd Bi-annual Budget Bill

Senator Bowman, Senator Rotundo, Representative Norton, Representative Fischer, Committee Members:

I am Ralph Stevens of South Berwick and a school board member of SAD 35. I am opposed to this proposal as written because the state is taking total control of education while paying 55% of the cost and not 100%. My firm belief, at this point in time, is to change school funding to 51% local and 49% state.

The governor's school budget proposal appears to be based primarily on a Brookings Institution Report. The Brookings Institution is an organization that supports anything that is big government and this proposal supports centralized growth in favor of local government. The Brookings Institution has an affiliated group here in Maine called Grow Smart to help promote the passage of this proposal. Obviously, this proposal needs a great deal of promoting as it now stands.

Commissioner Gendron made a presentation in Berwick. She mentioned Fairfax County Virginia as having only one superintendent for the whole county. Their website does indeed show only one superintendent and also some other interesting facts, such as:

1. One deputy superintendent
2. 7 other administrative offices within the superintendent's office
3. At least 8 assistant superintendents
4. 12 school board members at \$12,000 each per year and the chairman, an additional \$1,000
5. 11 support personnel for the school board with their own office
6. 32 administrative positions in just 1 high school
7. Projected cost per student (2007) - \$12,917 (Maine - \$9,356 [2005-2006], National average - \$8,245)
8. 1,718 non-school positions
9. I think that by now you get the picture; 1 superintendent is not cheap

A statement from the Commissioner's presentation from the Brookings Institution Report, "Maine's unusually high expenditures on a number of state level administrative functions as well as on K-12 education are likely squeezing out necessary spending in other areas even as they contribute to high taxes." I have not seen anything that addresses the "state level administration functions" or what they are. Only "K-12 education" is being addressed and where all the supposed savings are. You need to address the state portion of this proposal.

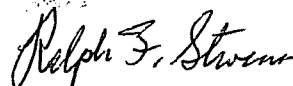
These are a few ideas for savings that come to mind without the wholesale dismantling of our present system:

1. Have perhaps 6 different school building plans that can be selected from for new construction
2. Not being forced to accept low bid for buildings to reduce the amount of shoddy materials that need replacement later
3. Appoint a committee to review all state mandates, regulations and rules. Get rid of all that are outdated and ineffective
4. Stop mandating programs that school systems must pay for in full for two years before receiving a percentage payment from the State (helps reduce property taxes).
5. Reduce the size of the Department of Education
6. Get the Maine Principals Association out of school athletics, thus saving large sums of property tax dollars

State administrations change every four or eight years and with these changes come different ideas. With education under state control, each new administration has the ability to change the educational system, thus putting education in turmoil every administrative change. This can and will happen. Whenever a new leader takes over, new ideas come with that person.

Can we do better on the local level? Absolutely, but the state also needs to do its share.

Sincerely,



Ralph F. Stevens
79 Old South Road
South Berwick, Maine
(207) 384-5013

Casco Bay Education Alliance Regional Study Group

Falmouth Public Schools

George H. Entwistle, 3rd, Superintendent
Beppie Cerf, Board Chair

Freeport Public Schools

Elaine Tomaszewski, Superintendent
Christopher Leighton, Board Chair
Chris Monroe, Board Member

SAD 51 (Cumberland and North Yarmouth)

Robert Hasson, Jr., Superintendent
Betts Gorsky, Board Chair
Polly H. Frawley, Board Member

SAD 62 (Pownal)

Joe Feeney, Superintendent
Paul Schumann, Board Chair
Jen Kaplan, Board Member

Yarmouth Public Schools

Kenneth J. Murphy, Superintendent
Toby Dilworth, Board Chair
Timothy Wheaton, Board Member

TESTIMONY REGARDING LEGISLATIVE PROPOSALS RELATIVE TO SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION UNIT CONSOLIDATION AND OTHER RELATED ISSUES - FEBRUARY 5, 2007 - NESDEC Study

Senator Bowman, Representative Norton, Senator Rotundo, Representative Fischer, and members of the Joint Standing Committees on Education and Cultural Affairs and Appropriations and Financial Affairs, my name is Beppie Cerf and I am Chair of the Falmouth School Board and a representative member of the Casco Bay Education Alliance Regional Study Group. I am here today representing the Regional Study Group. I will address the important work the Alliance has done to date and expects to complete by March 1st, 2007.

We acknowledge and hear the rationale for more efficient and effective delivery of education. Our obligation is to translate that to our communities. To that end, there is a group of school systems serving 7400 students in the 6 towns of Pownal, Cumberland, Falmouth, Freeport, Yarmouth and North Yarmouth, the CBEA Regional Study Group, committed to obtaining balanced and independent data.

We joined forces specifically to further improve the educational programs in our communities, discovering opportunities which are beyond our reach on our own, but possible together and to find ways to reduce costs by sharing and consolidating services and/or systems.

With these goals in mind, we pursued outside, independent research. The Department of Education (DOE) has endorsed this effort and awarded us a grant of \$25,000 from FEDES, the Fund for the Efficient Delivery of Educational Services. The Alliance is most appreciative of DOE's funding and vote of confidence. The grant supports our current work with NESDEC, The New England School Development Council. NESDEC is affiliated with the Harvard School of Education and incidentally, a member of our NESDEC team is David Silvernail from USM.

Because of this statewide initiative, we have asked NESDEC to answer these questions by March 1, 2007:

- What efforts will gain us the greatest opportunities to gain efficiencies?
- What levels of efficiency might we expect to achieve immediately and then, over time?
- What specific changes to our current organizational structures derive the greatest cost savings and promote overall academic excellence?
- What exactly do these new structures look like?
- What will it take (time, resources, money, expertise) to get from where we are now to our new structure?

The Casco Bay Alliance is proactive and we are problem solvers. We're looking forward to sharing our findings with you and with the communities we serve. We are confident that the data we share with you will help you in this process. We want to play a role in developing a plan that makes sense for all of Maine because we believe that with the right plan we can enhance educational opportunities for all students. Invite us back. The Casco Bay Education Alliance Study Group looks forward to your work sessions and the opportunity to share NESDEC's findings with you.

Casco Bay Education Alliance Regional Study Group

Falmouth Public Schools

George H. Entwistle, 3rd, Superintendent
Beppie Cerf, Board Chair

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Kenneth J. Murphy, Superintendent
Toby Dilworth, Board Chair
Timothy Wheaton, Board Member

Rationale for change

- Macro-to-micro

Casco Bay Education Alliance Regional Study Group

- Goals
- 7,400 Students
- School systems of Pownal, Cumberland and North Yarmouth, Falmouth, Freeport, and Yarmouth

Independent Shared Services/Consolidation Study

- Endorsed by Department of Education
- NESDEC (New England School Development Council)
- Effort on-going for a year

Outcomes

- Efficiency opportunities
- Cost-savings projections
- Organizational and governance structures
- Student achievement gains
- Requirements

Deliverables

- March 1st findings

Casco Bay Education Alliance Regional Study Group

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George H. Entwistle, 3rd, Superintendent

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Jen Kaplan, Board Member

Yarmouth Public Schools

Kenneth J. Murphy, Superintendent

Toby Dilworth, Board Chair

Timothy Wheaton, Board Member

Testimony Regarding Legislative Proposals Relative to Collaboration, Regionalization and Consolidation of SAU's

FEBRUARY 5, 2007

Senator Bowman, Representative Norton, Senator Rotundo, Representative Fischer, and members of the Joint Standing Committees on Education and Cultural Affairs and Appropriations and Financial Affairs, my name is Betts Gorsky and I am the Chair of the SAD 51 (Cumberland and North Yarmouth) School Board and a member of the Casco Bay Education Alliance (CBEA) Regional Study Group. I am here today representing the CBEA Regional Study Group along with Beppie Cerf, Chair of the Falmouth School Board.

Let me begin by saying that the CBEA Regional Study Group is currently engaged in a collaborative review of our five school systems and is ready to join with you to support constructive and thoughtful ways toward further regional cooperation, consolidation and excellence.

The CBEA Regional Study Group believes that legislative proposals for regional cooperation and consolidation must be based on the following 4 key elements, all of which are of equal importance:

Number 1: Make room for local initiatives that meet cost savings targets.

Local and regional initiatives, which meet cost savings targets in the area of school administrative expenses, should be encouraged and supported.

Falmouth, Freeport, SAD 51 (Cumberland and North Yarmouth), SAD 62 (Pownal) and Yarmouth are committed to looking for cost efficiencies through its current collaborative review, sharing that information with the Legislature and aligning our work with credible targets. We are working cooperatively to find cost efficiencies in the delivery of educational services while maintaining high quality educational systems. Our analysis is not yet complete, and we need to learn the results from our investigation to determine the best path forward.

Number 2: Honor community voice relative to the formation of regional alliances, the development of governance structures and the establishment of workable budget approval processes.

Maine communities should have the flexibility to form regional alliances with contiguous communities, develop workable governance structures and establish budget approval processes that provide meaningful and streamlined decision-making, accountable to the communities they serve. In this regard, any proposed change in governance structure or budget approval process should require local voter approval.

Number 3: Institute a workable timeline.

There must be reasonable time to implement any change, at least 18 months from the effective date of any legislation. It is essential that Maine communities feel invested in the change - support it and feel that it is responsive to local needs. We want to take advantage of cost-saving strategies as soon as possible, but we need time to implement change commensurate with its scale. Broad community investment and gains in student achievement are premised on building in time to include community members and the teachers and staff charged with carrying out new strategies.

Number 4: Maintain educational excellence.

The communities we represent, like all communities in Maine, are keenly invested in the education of their children. As part of our obligation to the communities we represent and to secure public support, we must be able to demonstrate that educational excellence will be maintained. This can only be done if we have the necessary data and time to properly assess which governance, administrative and operations structure and budget approval process is best suited to meet the needs of our communities.

In summary, please know that the Casco Bay Education Alliance Regional Study Group would welcome the opportunity to assist you in the development of a plan that makes sense for Maine and enhances educational opportunities for all students. We believe that information forthcoming from the CBEA Study Group which my colleague, Beppie Cerf, will now more fully explain can help inform your deliberations and the development of a viable plan. Thank you.

SCHOOL ADMINISTRATIVE UNIT CONSOLIDATION LEGISLATION
TESTIMONY
FEBRUARY 5, 2007

MEMBERS OF THE JOINT STANDING COMMITTEES ON EDUCATION AND CULTURAL AFFAIRS, AND APPROPRIATIONS AND FINANCIAL AFFAIRS, MY NAME IS DEBORAH HOLLAND AND I AM THE PRESIDENT OF MAINE ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL BUSINESS OFFICIALS (MEASBO). I AM ALSO THE BUSINESS MANAGER FOR MSAD #52 WHICH ENCOMPASSES THE TOWNS OF TURNER, LEEDS, AND GREENE. I AM HERE TODAY REPRESENTING THE MEMBERS OF MEASBO.

THERE ARE SEVERAL LEGISLATIVE PROPOSALS BEING PRESENTED TO YOU TODAY RELATED TO THE CONSOLIDATION OF SCHOOL ADMINISTRATIVE UNITS. WE ARE CONCERNED THAT THE GOVERNOR'S PROPOSAL IN PARTICULAR WILL RESULT IN THE LOSS OF DIRECT SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS AND THE INTRODUCTION OF NEW LAYERS OF COSTLY ADMINISTRATION AS THESE NEW ENTITIES, SOME OF WHICH ARE UNNECESSARILY LARGE, ARE FORMED.

MEMBERS OF OUR ASSOCIATION HAVE BEEN INVOLVED IN MANY EFFORTS WITHIN OUR OWN UNITS FOR COLLABORATION AND COOPERATION WITH OTHER UNITS ACROSS THE STATE INCLUDING BUT CERTAINLY NOT LIMITED TO THE WESTERN MAINE COLLABORATIVE AND THE NORTHWOODS GROUP. WE BELIEVE THAT ANY PLAN FOR CONSOLIDATION WOULD BENEFIT FROM DRAWING UPON THE EXPERIENCE OF THESE SUCCESSFUL COOPERATIVE EFFORTS ALREADY IN PLACE.

MEASBO OFFERS THE FOLLOWING AS AREAS WE STRONGLY BELIEVE ARE VITAL TO ANY SUCCESSFUL CONSOLIDATION PLAN:

1. ANY DECISION REGARDING CONSOLIDATION SHOULD INCORPORATE CURRENT AND VALID DATA THAT DEFINES SPECIFIC AND DETAILED AREAS OF COST SAVINGS AND ARTICULATES EXACTLY HOW THESE COST SAVINGS WILL BE ACHIEVED. ADOPTION OF A PLAN THAT RELIES UPON A STRATEGY OF MAKING PERCENTAGE CUTS IN STATE FUNDING LEVELS IN SEGMENTS OF SCHOOL OPERATIONS THAT HAVE NOT BEEN THOROUGHLY VALIDATED RUNS THE RISK OF ACCOMPLISHING THE OPPOSITE OF THE DESIRED EFFECT. IF NEW REGIONALIZED SCHOOL UNITS ARE UNABLE TO REDUCE BUDGETS IN THE MANNER ARTICULATED IN SUCH PROPOSALS, LOCAL TAXES WILL INCREASE AS 100% OF THOSE COSTS MUST BE FUNDED THROUGH LOCAL PROPERTY TAXES WHEREAS IN THE PAST THEY WERE SHARED BY THE STATE AND LOCAL UNITS.

2. ANY PLAN SHOULD INCLUDE MAJOR ELEMENTS OF STANDARDIZATION OF GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE PROCESSES AND SYSTEMS INCLUDING, BUT NOT LIMITED TO, STUDENT INFORMATION SYSTEMS, PAYROLL SYSTEMS, ACCOUNTING SYSTEMS, AND SCHOOL CALENDAR.
3. ANY CONSOLIDATION TIMELINE MUST RECOGNIZE THE NEED TO FINISH WORK WITHIN OUR CURRENT SCHOOL UNITS AT FISCAL YEAR-END INCLUDING FINANCIAL AND LEGAL MATTERS. TRANSITION TIME IS ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY.
4. CONSIDERATION SHOULD BE GIVEN TO THE POPULATION DENSITY AND GEOGRAPHIC ISOLATION WHEN DETERMINING SIZE OF SCHOOL UNITS. MEASBO MEMBERS BELIEVE THAT DISTRICTS BETWEEN THE SIZE OF THREE AND FOUR THOUSAND ARE MANAGEABLE WITHOUT THE NEED TO INTRODUCE NEW LAYERS OF ADMINISTRATION BETWEEN THE SUPERINTENDENT AND THE SCHOOLS. SUCH STRUCTURES WOULD BE COMPARABLE TO MANY EFFICIENTLY FUNCTIONING REGIONAL SCHOOL UNITS THAT CURRENTLY EXIST IN MAINE.
5. IT IS VITAL THAT THE CURRENT ISSUES BEING DISCUSSED SURROUNDING THE ESSENTIAL PROGRAMS AND SERVICES FUNDING MODEL, SUCH AS CLASS SIZE STANDARDS, THE INTRODUCTION OF LAPTOP COMPUTERS IN GRADES 9-12, AND THE INTRODUCTION OF ADDITIONAL SCHOOL PRINCIPAL POSITIONS BE ADDRESSED BY THE LEGISLATURE **SEPARATELY** FROM ANY CONSOLIDATION PLAN.
6. IT IS ALSO OUR BELIEF THAT THE STATE'S BIENNIUM BUDGET ISSUES CANNOT BE SOLVED SOLELY THROUGH A SCHOOL CONSOLIDATION PLAN.

MAINE'S SCHOOL BUSINESS OFFICIALS RESPECTFULLY REQUEST THE OPPORTUNITY TO WORK COLLABORATIVELY WITH YOU AND TO BE GIVEN THE CHANCE TO APPLY OUR KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF A SOLUTION THAT WILL WORK FOR MAINE STUDENTS, CITIZENS, AND TAXPAYERS.



Association of **Independent
Schools**

February 5, 2007

MAIS Members

Bangor Christian Schools
The Bay School
Berwick Academy
Breakwater School
Bridgton Academy
Carrabassett Valley Academy
Cheverus High School
Chewonki Foundation
Erskine Academy
Foxcroft Academy
Fryeburg Academy
George Stevens Academy
Gould Academy
Hebron Academy
Hyde School
John Baptist Memorial High School
Kents Hill School
Lee Academy
Lincoln Academy
Maine Central Institute
North Yarmouth Academy
Thornton Academy
Washington Academy
Waynflete School

MAIS Executive Committee

Donald Poulin, President
Erskine Academy
(207) 445-2962

Laurie Hurd, Vice President
Hyde School
(207) 443-5584

Daniel Kunkle, Secretary
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(207) 824-7700

JoAnn Douglass, Treasurer
George Stevens Academy
(207) 374-2808

David Hursty
Bridgton Academy
(207) 647-3322

Carl J. Stasio Jr.,
Thornton Academy
(207) 282-3361

Greetings to Members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee and to Members of the Appropriations and Financial Affairs Committee:

My name is Don Poulin and I serve as president of the Maine Association of Independent Schools and as Headmaster of Erskine Academy, a 735 student independent school located twelve miles from Augusta.

An Unintended Consequence

I urge you to **preserve school choice** as it now exists for students who live in communities without a public high school.

One of the little discussed yet potentially **destructive** unintended consequences of Governor Baldacci's school redistricting proposal revolves around the state's **independent schools** and the approximate 5500 publicly funded students that we serve. Should **any plan pass that does not protect school choice** as it currently exists, Maine's town academies could very readily **be wiped out** by a vote of the new district boards. Further, other private schools approved for tuition could be seriously disadvantaged. Although Commissioner Gendron informs us that the state has no intent to this purpose, be advised that neither the governor's proposal nor any of the other proposals to my knowledge **prohibit the district boards from eliminating choice** in order to fill seats in a given district's public schools.

School choice is available to students who live in communities that do not have a public high school. Maine's **10 town academies**, some of which date back to the 1790s, serve these communities, and, in fact, they have infused an approximate \$25,000,000 in **private funds** into their buildings and programs in a recent ten-year period. These private dollars support public students and public education.

Regionalizing Maine and the Weighted Vote System:
Does It Work?

Dear Legislature:

I have reviewed the new Regionalization Policy and found an area of concern I would like to bring to light. This is the subject of the weighted voting system. This one area has a negative impact on the regionalizing of our schools. I understand there will be a legislature hearing on the 5th in Augusta. I may be unable to attend this, due to a prior engagement. I am sending my concerns, however, along in this email for you to preview.

In general, I do think there should be a reconstruction overhaul to the current education district systems. I think, though, that the reconstruction should be done at the administration level. Administrative costs are skyrocketing and it would benefit the State of Maine to bring these more inline with realistic inflation expenditures. It would be wise to create a regional administration district so schools may share the costs and benefit in bulk services. These services and goods could be as follows: Special Education, Maintenance, Staff Development, and Supplies, just to name a few.

My concern with regionalizing individual districts, unions, etc. into one big region is the *Weighted Vote System*. As you have undoubtedly heard, Mainers are greatly in favor of keeping local control. The weighted vote system puts local control in danger. A town with higher population would receive more representatives physically and a higher weighted vote. Therefore, a smaller town could in essence, be outvoted each and every time. I realize our democracy is run under the one man-one vote theory. This works well for government operation. It would not work for big region districts in rural areas. In rural Maine, especially, many towns would be coming together and the higher populated town would win out. This leaves many small communities without fair representation or local control. They would get eaten up under this system. Even under our current district, we are struggling to maintain local control. I can't imagine what it would be like if we became a bigger district.

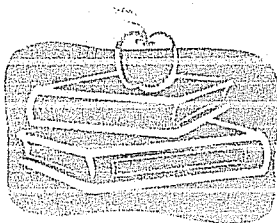
I understand it is not the intent of the Regionalization Plan to close schools. This would inevitably happen, though, because, again, of the weighted voting system. If a town wants to keep their small school open but the region votes to close it, then they really have no recourse. Even though they may be given the option of keeping the school open by paying the costs and savings to the region of the school, this is not a fair deal. It would probably be more expensive to do that then to just run the school under the municipality. From my understanding, the municipality school option would be gone under the new regionalization. There wouldn't be a choice to create a Municipality or Union School. A town would have to pay the district or lose their school. Of course, the town has already lost their school because the region will have taken it without the vote of the town or current district, union, etc. We voted to become an SAD in SAD #37, therefore, handing over ownership of our building to the district voluntarily. Under this plan, the building is handed over without a vote of the people. So, really, they are just taking property without permission.

Please consider these ideas when deciding to vote on the Regionalization Plan. Vote no to "Mega-Districts".

Sincerely,

Donnee' Emerson

Donnee.emerson@maine.edu



2-07-06

ESSENTIAL PROGRAMS & SERVICES
AN EXCELLENT EDUCATIONAL MODEL

EPS is an excellent model to guide schools. Certain guidelines in this package highly benefit some schools in the state of Maine. For instance, a ratio of 1:17 for teacher:students truly benefits the larger area schools who were, in the past, running on 25-30+ students per class. Combine this with the excellent programs these schools are already able to offer, i.e. second language, drama, football, swimming, etc., these schools greatly benefit children in regards to a well rounded education.

Smaller schools, however, are not so fortunate to offer a multitude of programs to fill in the gaps. They are able to offer, at the most, a basic education. This basic education is being put at risk by EPS. While EPS benefits larger schools, it doesn't exactly help the smaller ones. EPS, along with rising property valuations are causing smaller school districts to make unfair decisions. EPS is partially based on land valuations because the communities ability to pay is based on land valuation in relation to the EPS Funding Distribution Formula. It does not factor in the income level of communities, which is the true ability of the communities to pay. In contrast, though, the labor market, however, does consider the communities costs of living when handing out the money. *So why when giving us the money you consider our income but when deciding on the town's ability to pay, you do not consider our income level?* Mix this with a larger class size ratio and you have disaster. These schools are being faced with closing to cover costs for an education that is not even basic. For instance, SAD #37 has eliminated the music program. They don't have a nurse for the district, nor do they have a teacher for each grade in two schools. Ironically, these have been cut to *provide* education. They are now being faced with closing two high performing schools. How, do I ask, does this make for an Essential Education. Basic Programs and Services are not being delivered to our children, they are being eliminated.

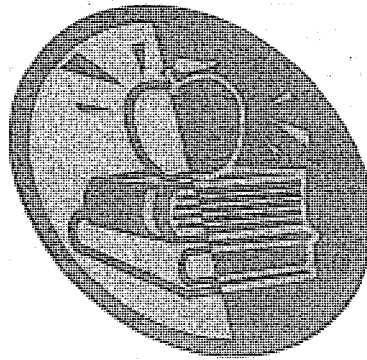
Another point I would like to make is that almost all people, ages 0 through 100+, are being negatively affected in some way if all the changes being proposed are put through legislation. Special Education and Services for ages 0 through 5 will negatively change things for these children if CDS is cut and put into public education schools. Ages 3-5 will be negatively affected if they are place into the public school education system. Ages 3-18 are being negatively affected by the changes brought about by EPS. Middle ages, 18+, are being affected because their town taxes are going up, with 70% of it going towards education. The elderly are greatly being affected because their property taxes are going up at a time when their income is most likely going down if they are retired. It is true that some of this comes from EPS and some from property valuations. *In the end, however, it all comes from the same place-our pockets.* This is too much to ask of small communities. I think most of us are feeling our final frustration limit from all angles and ages. Higher financial demands brought about by EPS causes our town taxes to go up

through local allocation. Higher financial demands are brought about by Property Valuations caused by land being valued higher in an area where the income level does not coincide with the land values. I am in hopes that the Education Committee and the Taxation Committee could work together to come up with a plan for rural area schools that could offer a quality education without unfairly taxing town taxpayers. These taxpayers, *your constituents*, are in need of a better plan. We are asking for your help in this matter. While the hidden consequences could not be forecasted, the apparent downfalls are now being brought to your attention. I greatly appreciate all the hard work that has been put into EPS and think it highly benefits some schools. I would now like to offer, however, that this does not work for some smaller areas. While 1:17 seems reasonable, it is not realistic for smaller areas. Smaller class sizes is all we have. We can't offer a variety of programs. The small class size allows us to "Catch Up", in essence, to larger schools, in regards to academics, which is obviously apparent by our high test scores in SAD #37. Please do not take this away. I urge you to revise EPS and add in a Plan II for rural areas. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Donnee Emerson

Donnee' Emerson
Columbia Falls Parent



**TESTIMONY REGARDING LEGISLATIVE PROPOSALS CONCERNING
SCHOOL ADMINISTRATIVE UNIT CONSOLIDATION AND
OTHER RELATED ISSUES**

FEBRUARY 5, 2007

SENATOR BOWMAN, REPRESENTATIVE NORTON, SENATOR ROTUNDO, REPRESENTATIVE FISCHER, AND MEMBERS OF THE JOINT STANDING COMMITTEES ON EDUCATION AND CULTURAL AFFAIRS AND APPROPRIATIONS AND FINANCIAL AFFAIRS, MY NAME IS ERIC MATTHEWS AND I AM THE SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS FOR OLD ORCHARD BEACH.

FIRST, I WANT TO GO ON RECORD AS OPPOSING GOVERNOR BALDACCIO'S CONSOLIDATION PLAN AS CONTAINED IN THE DRAFT BUDGET DOCUMENT. I FIND THIS PROPOSAL TO BE EXTREME WITH UNREASONABLE TIMEFRAMES AND BASED ON UNSUBSTANTIATED PROJECTED SAVINGS

We are most concerned about the loss of local control for the Old Orchard Beach Learning Community under the Governor's proposal. I would like to share two specific examples. A Regional Line Item Referendum encompassing Kennebunk, Kennebunkport, Biddeford, Saco, Dayton, Arundel and Old Orchard Beach would determine the fate of our local budget. Our community will be easily outnumbered in a regional vote. Also under this proposal, our local School Board would be reduced to an advisory group with no real role in making educational decisions and a new Regional Board of Directors would be installed. At this point, we don't know the structure of the Regional Board; however, it is clear that as a small town, Old Orchard Beach's representation would be less and our voice would be significantly diminished.

LASTLY, OUR SCHOOL DISTRICT HAS ALWAYS SUPPORTED EFFORTS FOR COLLABORATION, REGIONALIZATION, AND CONSOLIDATION. THERE ARE NUMEROUS SUCCESSFUL COLLABORATIONS WE ARE CURRENTLY INVOLVED IN. THE BEST EXAMPLE IS THE JOINT EFFORT BETWEEN OLD ORCHARD BEACH AND SACO IN OPERATING A VERY SUCCESSFUL ADULT EDUCATION PROGRAM. IN THAT SPIRIT OLD ORCHARD BEACH WILL CONTINUE TO WORK COLLABORATIVELY WITH ITS EDUCATIONAL NEIGHBORS. THAT WILLINGNESS TO COOPERATE WILL BE ENHANCED WITH THE INSTITUTION OF A REASONABLE AND THOUGHTFUL PLAN.

**Testimony Regarding the Governor's Reorganization Plan
Submitted by James A. Underwood, Superintendent of Schools, School Union 106, at Public
Hearing, February 5, 2007**

**Home Address: P.O. Box 218 Perry, Maine 04667
Office phone: 207-454-2296
Resident Phone: 207-853-9630**

1 - Make no Mistake

I've read the Brookings Institution Report carefully. I've taken notes and gone back and re-read, reexamined. And the governor's plan just does not add up. I keep hearing in regard to the governor's plan that our expenditure for public education in Maine per student exceeds the national average and that we must reduce costs to meet the national average. The sole reason for the governor's plan from both the Governor's office and the State Department of Education at its' first rollout presentations via ATM, MSMA conferences and other venues was stated unequivocally to be to create "better efficiencies" and "eliminate redundancies." When asked how the plan improved schools, the answer from the outset was that it was not about improving schools; repeatedly we were told, it is entirely about creating better efficiencies and saving the taxpayer money. The clearly stated goal was to reach the national average per pupil expenditure for the total operation of schools. A venture and a reorganization as vast and far reaching as the Governor's plan had better be correct from my point of view because there will be no recovery, no coming back from the derailing of education as we know it which the governor's plan will exact upon our children in every corner of the state. Very high stakes – and I'm afraid for little or no return, or even worse – negative return.

The Brookings Institution report set the national average for the cost of education per student at **\$7,416.00**. At the time of the Brookings Institution report, the average cost of public education per student in the state of Maine, according to the Brookings Institution report was set at **\$7,972.00**.

In the latest DOE Operating Expense and Elementary tuition rate setting which came out less than 2 months ago, the DOE's reported average total operating cost of public education in Maine, all K-8 student across the state's 217 elementary schools is **\$6,450.72**. This is the state's figure, total operating cost before any revenues are deducted at the local level – the actual cost per student to the local taxpayer can be as much as 1/3rd that cost as it is nearly that in my school district-with no help from the state dept. – purely through finding more efficiencies which we pass on to our local taxpayers. We are really good at that.

According to the DOE's average Operating Expense for all high school students across the state in this same reporting, the average total operating cost of public education in Maine across all students grades 9-12 is **\$7,254.52** - also beneath the national average.

These are the latest figures. I don't know what year the state data for the Brookings Institution was gathered; nevertheless, these are the latest figures from the Department of Education, certainly lower than the \$7,972.00. From whatever previous year the Brookings Institution report authors gathered for their publication – which I understand has not yet gone through a peer review. Check on that please. Superintendents and school committees in many areas of the state have been working hard to increase efficiencies and collaborations. Obviously, we have been making progress, significant progress in fact. The governor's plan will without question increase the cost of

education in my school union for local taxpayers and undoubtedly will drive up the cost of education overall for the taxpayer across the state.

2. Not About Saving Money

In fact, as I have read and re-read the institution's report and the governor's bill for understanding, my understanding is that this plan is not about saving money at all. If it is, then the studied word from those who have organized to study his data demonstrate his plan would eliminate teachers in the classrooms far greater numbers than the 649 teacher cuts his plan targets in the threshold year of his plan.

Incidentally, total central office administration in my district amounts to 2.4 per cent of the total K-12 budget. It makes little sense to me that a plan drives so hard at a dollar amount that is so very small in the context of the budget. Meanwhile, I learned last week that reportedly the governor has recently created new Public Relations offices for his commissioners, each commissioner, reportedly, with his or her own Public Relations officer. New administrative staff for these offices reportedly total 12 new administrators.

3. So what is the governor's plan about?

I find it very difficult at best, then, to believe that this plan is about saving money. (My conclusion is that it is about state control of schools. *Make no mistake.*)

In his 90-page bill, the governor has written: "*All matters pertaining to schools* will be determined by the Regional Board." It couldn't be much clearer than that. No matter how the so-called representation of the Regional Board is rearranged, any attempt to disguise the complete loss of local control is only transparent. Parents will be far away from the regional board members, superintendents distant from the buildings, the teachers, and the classrooms. Several layers and many miles removed from schools and classrooms, and from parents, the superintendent – and the regional board, will have little or no relationship with or impact on learning in the classroom or what is going on in schools. Is the intent to remove that direct contact? To insulate the regional board maybe from the impact of direct contact from its local constituency? If not intended, it is then an unanticipated consequence. Is that what you want? And is it better, ultimately, that our parents will find it less comfortable and certainly less productive to communicate on real terms with the regional board members?

Schools need the guidance, support and direction of our top administrative leaders in countless ways that are critical to the growth, development, learning and future of all of our children and young adults. Make no mistake, the separation of the chief instructional and program leader from the schools and the K-12 learning continuum is a terrible mistake for our children and for education in Maine.

Interestingly enough, the authors of the Brookings Institution report highlight and praise the local town meeting where local control happens as the center of the character of Maine's communities, of Maine itself. In their report, they recognize this character of local town meeting control and spirit as fundamental to the character, tradition, and future of Maine. They certainly support local control and do not recommend anything to the contrary.

4. The governor's plan we are have been told from the gate is not about closing schools.

Also in the governor's bill is this language:

"Secondary school. A regional learning community shall provide a secondary school facility as follows.

A regional learning community which enrolls more than 700 pupils in grades 9 to 12 may operate more than one 4-year school. Why haven't we heard this quotation from the bill on the rollout road? I'd say it's quite important. Very important. Maybe more important than most of what selected information we do hear? I wonder what else we haven't seen in the bill yet. I have a ways to go yet with it. Think of it: only one high school, for example, in the "new" Woodland, Calais, Shead area region can exist. But this is not about closing schools? Coupled with the threshold ratio increase to 17:1 and what is clear to follow in each successive year – reaching the national student : teacher ratio, schools will close, and teacher after teacher will be eliminated. Make no mistake. This plan goes much further I think than the 649 threshold teacher cut backs. And the state will be formulating and reformulating the guidelines and formulas as happens with EPS. Make no mistake of that. I think this plan might well be about closing schools – many schools, and programs. And that is not a good thing. The individual local communities, local taxpayers, local citizens and local school boards need to decide when and how a school must close, and when schools will stay open. The current provision in the governor's plan is only a travesty of this idea. If the governor's plan passes, if the regional board gains autonomy, make no mistake, there will be no local control of schools remaining open, of schools closing, of what programs are needed and appropriate, and the list goes on. Regardless of language regarding representation, the guidelines and control will come from Augusta and not the regional board or the local community. I ask you to redirect this sort of derailment.

5. Loss of Teaching Jobs/Negative School Climate:

Under the governor's plan, each of the teacher contracts from the abolished districts will be absorbed in one regional contract, and the implications begin. When a school closes in what was a different district with a different teacher contract, under one contract now, the school closes, but which teachers in the region will be without jobs now would depend on the new seniority list for an entire region. Schools will close and teachers will bump other teachers - and in many cases, teachers will then be teaching grade levels and subjects they never wanted to teach, and won't have a repertoire in. Now, both our children and our teachers lose. I've experienced what was to be such a "great idea" as the governor's. The result will be a disaster we will never recoup for our children and their future. I've lived through one of these, the governor, in all due respect, has no knowledge of the irreparable damage that is imminent. I think our citizenry is wiser than that. I hope our legislature is as well.

6. Make no mistake, no one wins in this reorganization plan – not the student, not the teacher, not the parent, not the 700 or 800 office workers without jobs and who depend on their paycheck to survive, and the taxpayer certainly will not benefit beyond a cup of coffee - and this only if the governor's projections are true. Calculations are proving they are not. Very high stakes with no return as far as I can comprehend.

These matters are merely the tip of the iceberg which we can see. We can only speculate as to what lies beneath.

I ask of you that you halt the Governor's Reorganizaition plan. The children, the taxpayers, and the future of Maine deserve far better. I ask that the misdirection of the Governor's plan be redirected in the areas outlined by the Brookings Institution Report authors in any subsequent plan in at least a few key areas of high return for the children, families and taxpayers of Maine as we *really* strive to Chart Maine's Future as the Brookings Institution authors recommend:

1. Population, Properties, Revenue and true Tax Relief for Maine's Citizens

We have come to believe across the state that our population is dwindling at a steady and constant pace. Interestingly enough, the authors of the Brookings Institution Report present voluminous data to illustrate that just the contrary has been occurring at a steady and fast moving rate. Their figures show that what they refer to as "Inmigration" is happening at a steady rate of 10's of thousands - at a faster rate in **every** county than the migration out of the state. Even Aroostook County they point out is growing steadily in population with the rate of inmigration continuously exceeding the migration out by considerable numbers. The Brookings Report authors place Maine at the lead in the nation for the rate of population inmigration and growth and describe this population as a combination of older and younger adults, not only a retiring population without children.

Properties: The Brookings authors place Maine out in front of the nation in the purchase and ownership of "second homes" – the midcoast area bought up almost entirely by out-of-staters as second homes. This is where the governor needs to go for significant increases in revenue from those who can afford it – and these are non-Mainers, non-residents, enjoying the coastline of Maine at the hardworking Mainer's expense. The authors of the Brookings report point out that this is where the "state" ought to go to raise revenue for its schools to the benefit of Maine's citizens and children, and this is the way the property tax for the single home owner and long time Maine citizen can have his/her property tax reduced in larger percentages. In my opinion, "nickel and diming" our children and closing our local schools for a pittance in tax reduction overall is not the right thing to do. Our children, our young adults and our citizenry deserve much more than that. The governor's plan may be a "bold plan" only by way of its drastic measures, but it is in my opinion only a drop in the true potential for saving a dollar, and certainly it does not bode well for our children's education and for our children's future.

2. Focus Area for Creating Efficiencies and Eliminating Redundancies

The Brookings report authors specifically identify the "suburbanization of urban areas" and larger school bureaucracies as the "culprits" where focus should be placed. The authors point here as the place to look where the costly redundancies reside and they identify four specific geographic locations: Bangor, Augusta, Lewiston-Auburn and Portland. The authors make particular note of 200 million dollars of school construction they indicate should not have occurred because 13 new schools were built to accommodate the suburbanizing "sprawl" that saw large numbers of students move from many school buildings in the urban areas to sprawling points all around the urban areas. The authors point out that the populations in many existing schools diminished tremendously, the schools continued to run as they always had, and the new schools were built – 13 of them – to the tune of \$200 million dollars – to take in the same students who had left those schools as their families moved outward to the suburban areas. The authors specifically name this sort of "sprawl" as the culprit in the rising redundancies in education – the expensive ones. They go on to point out that the rest of the recent construction – reconstruction and renovation – throughout the state was needed and should have been done.

3. Realistic Reduction in Administrative Costs

While the authors extol the fact that what they found throughout the state in their study was that Mainers all over the state are proud of the fact that they spend more per student on their education by supporting and promoting smaller class sizes (11.5 students per class per teacher being the state average), and the authors suggest that this may be the reason why Maine's students outperform students across the nation in nearly every other state. The authors never suggest or recommend that Maine should strive toward a national average expenditure per student as the governor and commissioner purport. What the authors of the Brookings Report do write, however, is that they believe that \$10 million to \$35 million dollars likely could be saved in administrative costs without, they say, consolidating a single school, or closing a single school. However, directly following their recommendations on the schools, the authors identify specifically, about \$240 million they state they think ought to be cut in the governor's state government in what they point out as "redundant" or excessive salary areas.

I repeat, no one wins in this reorganization plan, and most critical of all – our students who need our guidance, our direction, and our leadership, will lose the most. Quite frankly, I don't want to lose a single one of them. I know how critical our educational system in Maine is for our children – and again, especially those who need our strength and our leadership most. And this plan, quite frankly, many of our children and young adults will be, beyond any shadow of a doubt, very big losers.

Thank you for your time and attention.



GOVERNOR BALDACCIO'S LSRS PLAN WILL
KILL LOCAL CONTROL OF SCHOOLS

SUPPORT VOLUNTARY SCHOOL DISTRICT
CONSOLIDATION BY LOCAL VOTER APPROVAL

STOP STATE MANDATED CONFISCATION OF OUR
SCHOOL BUILDINGS BY REGIONAL DISTRICTS

EVERY COMMUNITY SHOULD HAVE ITS OWN
REPRESENTATIVE ON A SCHOOL COMMITTEE

LOCAL CONTROL OF SCHOOLS
WILL KEEP OUR SCHOOLS LOCAL

Some Political Implications of School District Consolidation

Presented by Robert Webster

Superintendent of Schools

School Union 76

Brooklin - Sedgwick - Deer Isle - Stonington

State Agent for Isle au Haut

February 5, 2007

In his inaugural address last month, Gov. Baldacci proposed, not thoughtful evolution, but instead a revolution in our state's local political structure: the abolition within twelve months of all locally elected school boards. The governor's plan might have been a bold proposal if he'd had the courage to make it part of his recent political campaign. He chose NOT to discuss, prior to the election, his plot to turn the world of school governance and administration upside down. Now the governor would like you, the legislators of our state, to take the heat that he wasn't willing to face at the ballot box.

Gov. Baldacci is using TABOR for his consolidation plan the way that President Bush used WMDs to push Congress into a war in Iraq. The governor would use fear of another TABOR referendum as a reason for legislative action. Resist the governor's scare tactics. The people of Maine are counting on you not to be the latest herd of elected sheep stampeded into bad public policy.

Local control is not "too expensive" as the governor would have you believe. What price are you willing to put on preserving or abandoning local democracy? Rural Mainers value their right vote a neighbor to the local school board. The legislature should set up a framework for communities to take a look at regional plans for fewer school districts. But leave the final decision up to the voters of each municipality.

Of the bills before you, Sen. Mitchell's and Sen. Edmunds' bills are the two that preserve local school control. The key feature of acceptable legislation is recognition that the citizens of each town shall be afforded the right to vote on their own school's future. Many legislators have stated their intention to use the best from all of the bills on consolidation. That final bill must allow for a local decision.

Does the figure of \$250 million sound familiar to you? That is what the governor thinks his redistricting scheme will save in its first three years. Two years ago during budget planning

for the current biennium. Governor Baldacci thought that state government should borrow a similar amount of money to fund current state services: mortgage the future to pay for the present; credit card government. This was such an ill-advised idea, Sen. Peter Mills initiated a petition drive to give voters the chance to exercise a people's veto. The governor backed down. Now he's advancing another bad idea: state mandated district consolidation. Where DOES he come up with this stuff?

If this legislature passes any law forcing school district consolidation on the towns and cities of Maine, the grassroots response will be another petition drive to repeal forced consolidation. Washington and Hancock counties alone will provide at least a third of the signatures needed for a vote to repeal a forced consolidation law. I'm confident a people's veto would enjoy landslide success.

Governor Baldacci has proposed a revolution in school governance. If he succeeds IN ANY FORM at forcing district consolidation, the revolution will not stop there. It could be the tipping point that ends the long period of political dominance enjoyed by the party now in control of both branches of state government. State mandated consolidation will reverberate back and forth across the state in 2008, sweeping away many of those who sacrificed our right to control our own schools. Revolutions, once unleashed, are all about unexpected consequences.

This legislature ought to pass a bill that encourages larger school districts of perhaps a minimum size of 1000 to 1500 students, with exceptions for isolated schools. That makes sense for the geography and the smaller population centers of the state. But leave the size of districts to the proposed planning alliances which can tailor them to local conditions. And leave the final decision on joining a new, larger district up to the people in each town and city, who will then be in a position to live with the tax consequences of their own decision. The quality of our children's education should be in local hands. Local control will ensure that our schools stay local. Thank you.

Kathryn M. Balteff
MDIHS
PO Box 180
Mount Desert, ME 04664

I am a teacher at Mt. Desert Island High School. I recently returned to Maine after living and teaching out of state for a number of years. During the time I lived outside of Maine, I worked in large consolidated school districts where student to teacher ratios were often as high as 35:1, portable classrooms had to be brought in to accommodate students, some students had to be bussed in with rides of over 2 hours, standardized test scores often dropped and the school was unable to meet AYP, extra curricular activities were next to non-existent because many of the students lived too far away to participate, or there was no means of transportation to allow them to participate, and the general climate of the school was one of hopelessness and simply trying to keep our heads above water. One of the reasons my husband and I made the decision to return home to Maine for our retirement years, was that we believed that our state held education of our students in the highest standard and would continue to do so. Another reason we chose to return was the diversity and sense of community our small towns, especially our island communities exhibit. Maine is a place where "small town America" truly still exists.

While I believe that reduction of the state's property tax burden is a necessity that needs to be addressed – especially for our island communities – I am very concerned of the effect the proposed school consolidation plans will have on our island's schools and the quality of education in Maine as a whole.

Our islands are just that – islands. They are mostly isolated, tight-knit, self-sustaining communities with diverse socio-economic structures and needs. The local

schools are the community center for many of these communities. The school serves as the education hub not only for students of K-12, but also for adult learners whether it is a recreational class or distance learning from the University of Maine or other colleges. Additionally, the schools are a community center where the entire town can and does meet for different meetings and activities throughout the year. If these schools disappear and the students are forced to be transported to inland schools, we are dismantling one of the vital components of the community.

While the governor's plan calls for "like-minded" communities to be grouped together in new districts, it is difficult to come to terms with how this is possible. I would challenge anyone to show me any island communities that are similar to any mainland community. The economic base and lives of islanders differ substantially from those in mainland villages. The proposed redistricting is based on population density. This leaves many islands without representation in the new proposed districts because the limited number of school board seats would be based on the number of students a specific community is contributing to the district.

However, as important as these issues are for our local communities they are only a part of a larger, extremely critical concern for Maine State education. The most important issue at stake is that of quality education for our students. How can the creation of these "super districts" promote more effective teaching and learning for Maine's children? As educators we are required to provide teaching and learning strategies and results that are based on proven, scientific, data-driven research. The essential question here is – where is the data that proves that this will effectively promote a higher standard of learning for our children? What is the cost to education for the

“expected” limited savings of tax dollars? How do we know that the proposed school consolidation will promote and protect the future of our youth – in essence the future of our state?

Testimony of Roger Berle, Chair of the Maine Islands Coalition
February 5, 2007

School District Consolidation

Year Round Island Communities: A Now Even More Endangered Species?

There are today but fourteen pods of people living out where the only form of transportation is a boat, the occasional plane flight notwithstanding. But, there are no roads leading out here, no buses, no trolleys, no – can you conjure up the image? These are places to which people from hot, dusty, busy places flock for a week or two in July or August. But, there are real, live, functioning families living out here during the other ten months as well. No matter how windy or cold it gets. Whether the boats run or the planes fly. Whether there is illness or the only island store is closed.

Beyond a suitable fresh water supply, what is the only major consideration in the survival of these fourteen year-round communities? The School.

Not too long ago, there were over three hundred of these off-shore, year-round communities sustaining themselves. Now, there are but fourteen. And, along with the Camden Hills and Moosehead Lake, these are the places Maine touts as epitomizing Maine as “The Way Life Should Be.”

As is the case across the whole state, Maine’s island communities are aging too; the hardy independent sorts living out here fight tooth and nail not to be hauled off to a mainland retirement home. But it is the presence of a school which allows young families to move to or stay on these islands, to keep those elderly here and this community alive.

Island families are likely to be highly involved and invested in their schools. Several of these few, remaining schools have ten or less students, so clutching this educational infrastructure to their core being draws parents and locals to the classroom to reinforce the importance of these institutions to their survival. To monitor what their kids are receiving. To volunteer as readers. To have meetings and suppers. To exercise local control over what goes on in there. TO MAKE SURE IT DOESN’T DISAPPEAR. Which would force them to move. Away from their homes, from their fishing grounds, from their neighborhoods and extended families.

Imagine, if you can, that you had no confidence that the school your second grader attends now might not be available to her in the third grade. What do you tell her? And, trust me, you're not going to put that eight-year-old on a ferry in a bitter north wind every day before daylight to be delivered to another school – even if there were one to which she could be sent.

Great Cranberry Island kept their school “open” in recent years even without any kids to go there – so that they could draw young men and women to sustain their communities. Chebeague Island seceded from the Town of Cumberland in 2006 in order to have control over the future of their school. In 1970, Cliff Island's seven-pupil school faced a closure scenario imposed upon it by the across-the-bay Portland School Committee. Isle au Haut and Monhegan. Matinicus and Frenchboro. These communities need the ability to assure themselves that they can keep their schools open.

Our point? Islands are different. Schools are crucial to their survival. Local commitment to these schools keeps them not only viable but flourishing. There are less than five hundred students in these island schools out of two hundred thousand statewide. Do the calculation. In greatly enlarged consolidated districts, the islands' constituencies will be at greater risk of not being heard – or funded. Might this not be... Taxation without representation?

And that would be bitterly ironic, at best. Because these islands have some of the very highest property valuations in Maine and therefore bear some of the very highest property tax burdens in the State – exactly what Governor Baldacci is trying to address with consolidation planning. We totally applaud his intent even while we sense a storm tide about to wash away our unique, precious, endangered communities. Islands are different. Save our Schools from remote management decisions. Please!

Roger Berle, Chairman
The Maine Islands Coalition



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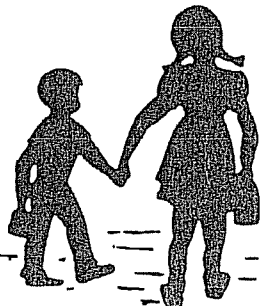
TO: The Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs
and the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and
Financial Affairs

FROM: General Wallace Nutting

DATE: February 5, 2007

RE: Governor's Consolidation Proposal

The attached testimony was offered by Biddeford Mayor and School Board
Chair General Wallace Nutting.



Member of THE MAINE EDUCATION LEADERSHIP CONSORTIUM

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SCHOOL DISTRICT REGIONALIZATION PROPOSALS
HEARINGS, AUGUSTA CIVIC CENTER, 5 February 2007

1. BIDDEFORD PRO @ CONSOLIDATION -- ATTEMPTED FD CONSOLIDATION
CHANGE NOT EASY -- ESSENTIAL TO SURVIVE w/ SERVICES, TAXES
2. GOVERNOR'S PROPOSED REGION 25: Biddeford, Saco, OOB, Arundel,
Dayton, Kennebunk, Kennebunkport...@ 10,000 students...

CONCERNS:

3. COMPLETED SIX "NEW" CONTRACTS each for 3 years...
4. LOST JOBS -- UNEMPLOYMENT SELF-INSURED -- FUNDS INSUFFICIENT
5. NEW MIDDLE SCHOOL -- DEBT SERVICE?
6. FEDERAL FUNDS REDUCTION? OFFERED ON REGIONAL BASIS?
7. BUDGET FUNCTION REMOVED FROM CITY CONTROL?

PRINCIPLES:

8. GOAL: DELIVER BEST, MOST REASONABLE EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES
9. NEED INTERMEDIATE STAFF, CHAIN OF COMMAND/RESPONSIBILITY,
BETWEEN SUPERINTENDENT AND PRINCIPAL
10. CONSOLIDATE ADMINISTRATION AND LOGISTIC FUNCTIONS FOR MAXIMUM
EFFICIENCY -- DO SOME NOW
11. EXISTING SCHOOL DISTRICTS EFFECTED BY REORGANIZATION SHOULD
BE INVOLVED IN DEVELOPMENT OF PROPOSAL
12. SOME SENSIBLE CONSOLIDATION AND SAVINGS CAN BE ACHIEVED

Testimony for Public Hearing on
Proposed Consolidation of School Districts

By: Judith Denton Jones, Ph.D.; Chair, Maine Association for Public Charter Schools

To the Members of the Education and Appropriations Committees:

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today. As a sociologist, planner, and parent, I have had the opportunity to help develop public school collaboratives in other states, and have participated in choosing among public school programs for my own children. On the basis of this experience, I suggest that Governor's proposals are fundamentally flawed. There are other ways of approaching the problems of education costs and quality in Maine.

I. Current consolidation proposals

The various consolidation proposals are flawed because they:

- * rely on poor research;
- * use faulty logic;
- * propose mandates instead of incentives for change; and
- * leave out options for parents, students, and educators.

A. Poor Research

Both the report of the Select Panel on Revisioning Education and the Maine Children's Alliance report suffer from having limited participation in their discussions to members of the status quo education groups in Maine. They did not invite representatives of groups representing under served children in Maine, groups advocating expanding options within the public education framework, or groups working with small and rural schools.

The third report that the Education Commissioner admits to having used to prepare the consolidation proposal is the Brookings Report. The data in that report on education costs is shallow, as discussed by Professor Gordon Donaldson in his study, "Pursuing Administrative Efficiency for Maine's Schools: How our Past Can Inform our Current Decisions." Another problem with using the Brookings report to support consolidation proposals, is that one of Brookings' major recommendations is for Maine to keep its "brand" of small villages and towns. Undermining the viability of schools in small towns is a sure way to reduce the appeal of living in small Maine villages and their economic prospects.

Among the shortcomings of these reports are the following:

1. The assumption that, in education, larger administrative units are more efficient in terms of administrative costs. Where's the evidence? Studies in other states, especially West Virginia, showed no savings in administrative costs after 10+ years of district consolidation. See the reports by the Rural School and Community Trust, www.ruraledu.org.
2. Confusing correlations with causation. Having many small schools, low teacher-student ratios, many small districts, and relatively good achievement scores are highly intertwined and interrelated facets of education in Maine. But correlations do

not indicate the direction of causal factors. Calling for massive change in some factors, such as size of districts and size of schools, without understanding causal connections, risks serious unintended consequences.

3. Counting "inputs" as "outcomes" - as in using numbers of AP courses as an outcome for students, when it is one of many "inputs" to an education program, not an indication of student learning.

4. Omission of any reference to national discussions about the organizational dynamics of public school systems. Attached is an excerpt from Ted Kolderie's, "Creating the Capacity for Change: How and Why Governors and Legislatures Are Opening a New-Schools Sector in Public Education," www.educationevolving.org.

5. Omission of any reference to the need for public school options in Maine, in spite of all the Maine Children's Alliance and Kids Count data over the past several years documenting the increasing diversity of learning needs among children in Maine. The current spectrum of choice in Maine is distributed very inequitably: families of high income can access private schools; families in towns that tuition out can access a variety of private and public schools with public funds, (although those choices are limited by a family's ability to supplement town tuition payments for high-cost private schools).

6. Omission of any discussion of the benefits of allowing families, students, and educators to choose the schools they attend and support, including the positive effects on parental involvement and teacher empowerment.

7. Omission of any reference to the national debates over public and private school choice, and the dramatic growth of the public chartered school movement in 40 states and DC. And so, there is no discussion of how the public chartered school model is providing real incentives for keeping administrative costs down, a much better approach than state mandates that haven't worked for decades. These reports do not address issues of equity for families of modest income.

B. Faulty Logic

a. Source of high per pupil education costs is mistaken -
The Governor asserts that Maine must have high administrative costs because it spends above the national average per pupil in operating expenses and has lower than average teacher salaries. Others have documented the fact that Maine has many more teachers per student than most other states, due to low student-teacher ratios.

b. Savings from firing superintendents are an Illusion -
The numbers don't add up to the proposed savings when you look at reducing the number of superintendents. If the state doesn't need so many superintendents, the first step is to change the law requiring every district to have one.

c. Joint purchasing will save \$ while not affecting education quality -
To the extent that bulk purchasing can save money, it can be encouraged without being forced on all schools through large districts. If local schools are responsible for educating their students, they should have flexibility to use their resources to meet

those children's needs. Having standardized curricula and texts purchased cheaply through large districts is wasted money for schools for whom those texts are inappropriate to their students' learning needs.

C. Mandates have limited effects

There is an assumption in these proposals that centralized management will improve education outcomes. There is little evidence from other states that centralized control of education resources in large districts has a positive impact on student learning. On the contrary, many states' policy makers now support the approach of delegating the majority of funds and decisions to each individual school. They believe that the educators who work with children every day are the ones most likely to make decisions in the best interest of each child.

D. Students should be assigned to schools

Another implicit assumption is that student assignments are best made by districts, not parents. But, as long as students only have the right to attend their town-operated school, administrators will control resources and all the mandates in the world will not succeed in reducing administrative expenses. A better way is to encourage a variety of public school options and enable parents to choose among them. When funds follow each child, and a public school has to manage with the sum of those funds, each school has a strong incentive to focus on the quality of its learning programs and to control administrative expenses. Otherwise, they risk losing students and the funds that each brings.

II. A Better Approach - FUND EACH CHILD

Any major policy change in the structure and operations of public education in Maine should include expanding options available to families to meet the diverse needs of their children. Rather than rapid centralization, we should add incentives aimed to evolve new ways of improving education quality and stabilize costs.

We recommend that Maine adopt a form of "weighted student funding" (WSF) as the mechanism for improving our education offerings. The key elements include:

1. Funds would follow each child to the public school attended, as selected by parents.
2. Per-student funding would vary according to each child's need and other relevant circumstances.
3. Schools would receive real dollars (not positions...) that could be spent flexibly to meet students' needs, with accountability for education results (not inputs, programs or activities).
4. All local, state, and federal funds would be allocated through WSF principles.
5. All funding systems would be simplified and made understandable by the public. FMI, see www.edexcellence.net/fundthechild/proposal.

III. Summary of Recommendations:

Two important steps to improve the cost-effectiveness of public education will be to enhance "Local Control" at each school and to create public education options.

CREATING the CAPACITY for CHANGE:
How and Why Governors and Legislatures Are Opening a
New-Schools Sector in Public Education
TED KOLDERIE

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Available from www.edweek.org

Testimonial Regarding Governor Baldacci's Consolidation Proposal 2/05/2007

When looking at the governor's proposal a great thing is seen. The state would save a substantial amount of money. It looks as though every taxpayer will eventually see a break. On paper it looks easier to manage 26 districts instead of the number there is now. The surface of this proposal is a beautiful thing. However, when digging a little deeper it is apparent that there are underlying problems. Is the cut in education where we want to be saving our money? How is this cut going to effect the education of Maine's young people? How is it really going to affect Maine's economy?

It is understandable that it takes a great deal of money to run the smaller school districts, but look at the education of the children that would be sacrificed if their schools were closed. This would result in longer bus rides for the children, cutting into their extra curricular activities, homework time, family time, and just being a kid. For instance the many children that live in rural Maine would have a much longer bus ride, up to 1-2hrs one way. This would mean that they would have to get up very early and have an even longer day than they already have. Many children have trouble concentrating during the already lengthy school day. We want our children to enjoy their education not resent it.

The smaller schools have more of a community backing than the larger ones. In the smaller school the lines of communication are always open between students, parents, teachers, administrators, and school board members. Consolidation to larger regions would result in a barrier to the lines of communication. Right now at every Shirley school board meeting the superintendent is present. There is that personal atmosphere that will not be able to continue at a regional board meeting, where there would be community members from up to 30 towns.

The loss of so many jobs is also concerning. We have already lost so many jobs around the state due to mills and factories closing. Around 2,000 Maine residents will lose their jobs with the governor's proposal. This will have quite an impact on the state's economy.

If the consolidation happens, we will lose local control. The school boards are made up of local people serving the communities that they love. The smaller schools have a more personal touch that is so characteristic of our great state. Maine cannot handle a change this catastrophic in such a short amount of time. Let's not worry about what is in our pockets and forget about Maine's future, **the education of our children.**

Thank you for allowing us this time to voice our concerns.

**Respectfully submitted by Shirley School Board Members,
Aimee Nichols
Mindy Hanson**

**School District Regionalization Proposal Hearings on this day the fifth of
February 2007.**

Respectfully submitted by:

Michael Martin-Zboray

Assistant Principal

Conners-Emerson School

Bar Harbor, Maine

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In touting his proposed school consolidation plan across the state, the Governor has repeatedly stressed the phrase: "educational excellence and not...administrative excess" The inference being that a Maine student's ability to reach excellence is currently undermined by administrative excess. I am here today to refute this assertion.

Excellence

Every year, the US Department of Education issues the "Nation's Report Card." This report is based upon the results of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), a standardized test of Math, Reading, Writing and Science administered to students in grades 4 and 8 across the country. Last week my 4th grade students took this very same test. Over the last 5 years Maine students have consistently scored above the national average in all areas. Clear excellence despite the fact that Maine pays \$290 less per student for student support services such as curriculum coordinators, guidance counselors, special education directors, business managers and clerical support as reported by Dr. Gordon Donaldson, University of Maine. In his report Pursuing Administrative Efficiency for Maine's Schools, Dr. Donaldson asserts, and personal experience confirms, that the school's administrators in fact provide these instrumental support services. "Our product is better." (Donaldson, 2006)

California and West Virginia are two states where recent consolidations, such as the one proposed for Maine, have been enacted. These states do pay less than Maine, anywhere from \$1,000 to \$1,500 less per student. However, their state's NAEP scores are also far less, in fact well below the national average. This is not excellence.

Maine is a large, mostly rural state. Communities are broadly spread and as a result, we experience inconsistent standards of teaching and notable inefficiencies. However several SAUs (School Administrative Units) have already taken the initiative and joined forces with neighboring districts, bolstering professional development, sharing costs and providing opportunities for teachers to strengthen their practice. It is this focus on teaching and learning, highlighted in Michael Fullan's recent report, A Look to the Future: Maine Education Reform, that is key to Maine's continued effort toward higher levels of student achievement. Fullan points out that superintendents have played a key role in creating educational reform in Maine. They are truly educational leaders, not the anonymous bureaucrats dictated by the structure of LSRS in its current form.

Excess

Recent encounters with both the Palesky measure and TABOR highlight the fact that Mainers are struggling with hard economic realities and they are looking for solutions. However, the defeat of these same measures speaks to the fact that Mainers are seeking sensible, sustainable reform, not drastic measures which bring a diminishing quality of life through unintended consequences. Eliminating waste and inefficiency is vital, sacrificing our educational standards is nonsensical.

The question then is how much do we actually spend, and how do we spend it? Citing data from the National Center of Education Statistics, Dr. Donaldson found that from 1999 to 2003, Maine averaged \$65 per pupil more on administration than the national average. However, in 2003-2004 Maine was found to pay \$16 less than the national average. The current consolidation plan is pitched as putting more money into the classroom rather than being spent on administration. This implies that current practice is to pay administrators over classroom instruction. Untrue. We "have the distinction of placing second in the nation in the percent of our expenditures that go directly to "instruction and instruction related activities." (Donaldson, 2007)

Conclusion

Look at the big picture as you work toward a final budget. LSRS is not a silver bullet and as Stephen L. Bowen of the Maine Heritage Policy Center points out in his report, Education Service districts, that "drawing new and bigger boxes around existing problems will not reduce costs...and that the experiences of West Virginia and California reveal that consolidation in itself will not guarantee lower costs, and may even increase them." Bowen also suggests that this consolidation may impact negatively on student achievement and create larger, less responsive bureaucracies. Let us instead focus on moving Maine forward. The Brookings report was clear when it stated that "the state has taken little advantage of opportunities to raise revenue that could take some of the burden off of Maine property and income taxes." We'll need smart, educated kids to grow into smart, educated adults for our future.

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Testimony Before Legislative Education & Appropriations Committees -- Feb. 5, 2007

Greetings, ladies and gentlemen, Chairs and members of the Committees. Thank you for this vital work that you do and for the opportunity to speak.

I am Keith Cook and I am here today as a parent and a grandparent, a resident of Maine for 64 years, and as a practicing psychologist. I earn no money from schools. I live in Waterville where we have one of the highest mill rates in the State. I am very interested in having my property taxes go down -- but not on the backs of kids and schools.

So, I would like to share some thoughts about why this LSRS plan would be a serious mistake and some principles that I believe would help improve it.

1. LSRS will close many small, local schools. Despite protestations otherwise, it is explicitly and implicitly in the bill. These schools are predominately rural and often contain 50%-80% low income students (Free or Reduced Lunch). It is well understood that the single best predictor of academic success is the socioeconomic status (SES) of the family. Higher SES generally leads to higher achievement and conversely. But when you place low income kids in smaller schools, the negative impact of poverty on achievement is often neutralized.

Small schools are an antidote to poverty. They are like greenhouses for low income kids. A new study at the University of Maine just this Fall has documented this again.

When you bus low income students to larger schools, they get marginalized and tend to drop out. One thing you as legislators can do to continue to help break the cycle of poverty and its costs to our State is to keep small schools open and supported with local governance. We can't afford not to. We want low income kids to become taxpayers not join the welfare rolls.

2. Learn from our past - or - "We already did this once." Contrary to popular myth, consolidation into larger administrative units has not reduced costs. Under the Sinclair Act we formed 71 or so larger administrative units (SAD's). During the 1950's, before Sinclair, administrative costs increased slightly by 6%. Under Sinclair, costs in the 1960's escalated 119%. Then from 1970 - 2000 they increased further by 370%. No savings. The hidden agenda is not money, but to increase State power.

3. Realize the mission has changed and is now different then we thought. Recent research from the University of Maine on administrative and support services costs in Maine, reveals a new picture.

While Maine spends \$65. more per pupil on administration than the national average,

we spend \$290. p.p. less on services in support of students -- **these services are often being performed by local superintendents.** Furthermore, Maine's spending on administration, as a *percentage of all education spending*, is fourth lowest nationally. We are hardly top heavy.

So, let us consider that what started as a belief that money is being wasted on central offices is now a mission to engage everybody in thinking more creatively about how to save funds in the entire educational enterprise.

Start here - Engage local people in the work. Find out what is already working and publicize it. Provide leadership instead of mandates. Encourage options and innovation. Promote cooperation in the intent, tone and attitude of your bill and people will follow. You can't get that with mandates.

• **Slow down. Allow time to think.** If any bill is a good one, it can withstand scrutiny and does not need to be rushed through the legislative process.

Take your time. You are impacting kids.

Thank you.

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January 28, 2007

RE: School Consolidation (LSRS Initiative)

Dear Honorable Representatives and Senators,

I ask that you thoroughly look at the school consolidation proposals and take into consideration input from educational organizations, educators and the general public. I understand that the Governor and others are looking for ways to reduce the tax burden in response to referendums such as TABOR, and I respect them for so doing. However, these proposals, especially Governor Baldacci's, will significantly impact Maine citizens. I have serious concerns as to whether state mandated mega districts are the answer.

Governor Baldacci's January 5th address says that his plan will sustain prosperity in Maine. I fail to see the prosperity of putting people out of work and also see other flaws in the LSRS proposal.

Governor Baldacci's plan is being presented to the legislature February 5th. If passed, the regions will be established by June. Let's slow down, figure out the missing details, and come up with a plan developed by Maine people with public approval versus a state mandated plan. In the spirit of the Sinclair Act, let Maine citizens be in charge of their own destiny.

I want tax relief. However, after reading about regionalization of Maine's school administrative units and attending a public forum, I question whether Governor Baldacci's school consolidation plan which lacks critical details is really a well thought out solution or an attempt, however well-intentioned, to quickly appease voters? Why not explore other tax saving alternatives, for example, out-of-state individuals who own second homes?

The LSRS Initiative runs counter to the recommendations for consolidation included in the State Board of Education Select Panel's recommendation to create 65 SAUs with 3,000-4,000 students, excluding currently larger SAUs which would remain intact (Original recommendation was 35 but later deemed not feasible.) A recent USM study asserted that the optimal size for both educational quality and financial efficiency is 3,700. The National average is 3,200. Governor Baldacci's proposal differs radically by creating small regions of 1,800 students and mega regions of 15,000 to 20,000 students.

Collective bargaining, sharing regional schools, staff development, and purchasing can be pursued regionally leaving local control intact without the State mandating districts. Maine districts such as the Casco Bay Education Alliance currently are discussing how to collaborate and share services. Collaborative efforts can yield many of the same benefits and be accomplished more quickly with fewer institutional obstacles since they leave existing governing structures intact. Why pay increased costs associated with integrating computer systems, redesigning transportation and administration, and combining collective bargaining agreements in a mega district?

How are state mandated mega systems governed by regional boards far removed from daily operations, its members responsible for multiple communities, some communities' representation significantly less than 10% and the likelihood that politics could influence decisions better? Voting power allocated based on population causes smaller communities to lose influence and control. Communities differ in outlooks and opportunities. Individuals live in specific communities for this very reason. If the regional board votes to close a school and the community wishes to keep it open, the community absorbs the cost.

LSRS promotes cutting administration including 649 teachers as well as administrators and support staff (500+) as the answer. Why are we eliminating teaching positions? I thought Maine wanted to attract highly qualified teachers. How does increasing our students' class sizes improve education for our children? These are not only superintendent positions. Payroll and accounting staff, secretaries, custodians, and others who perform daily tasks that support education and meet a myriad of state and federal regulations will be eliminated. The governor said that no extra work would fall on the teachers or principals due to the elimination of these positions. Who will do this work? Will the teachers and principals become clerks?

Education needs competent, engaged management just like any other business. How effective will a consolidated, essentially absentee school management be?

Students' and personnel needs won't decrease. Will the mega regional offices, especially in Southern Maine (Region 23 with 20,000 students), deliver the same personal service to schools as the local Central Offices do? Presently, districts are small enough so staff recognize students' names and react quickly to resolve situations. What will a bureaucratic mega regional office do? Will the students be a number?

A study by G. Donaldson Jr. shows that although Maine spent \$65 more per pupil on administration in the 1999-2003 period, Maine spent \$290 less per pupil on auxiliary student support staff and services showing that Maine administrators wear more hats than counterparts in other states. The 9.3% spent in Maine for "general" and "school" administration was the fourth lowest in the United States (9.3% in Maine vs. 11.3% nationally).

I am also concerned with the lack of thought given to the plight of the individuals who will lose their jobs if the LSRS initiative is passed as proposed. The Governor says that these employees will receive unemployment and training. Why does the proposal fail to provide severance pay for dedicated employees, many of whom have given ten or more years to Maine education?

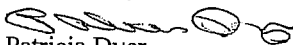
Central Office employees are already highly skilled. What will they train for since the majority of Maine jobs are low paying, often without health insurance or accompanied by wages too low to allow employees to purchase insurance? The reality in Maine is that working families do live in homeless shelters.

What about the ripple effect that 1,200 unemployed individuals will have on other Maine businesses from decreased purchases? What about the increased costs of social services including unemployment and Medicaid? Due to low turnover, attrition will not prevent significant job losses for Central Office employees before the proposed implementation date of July 1, 2008.

I am not a school administrator. I am, however, a support person who manages the paperwork freeing our educators to teach and our principals to lead. I care about our students and want an education for my own family that prepares them for tomorrow's challenges. I also care about the administrative people who work every day to make that education happen.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully submitted,



Patricia Dyer
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Dear Committee Members,

My name is Robert Snyder and I am the Vice President of Programs at the Island Institute in Rockland, Maine. The Island Institute is a non-profit that has been partnering with Maine's island communities for 24 years to ensure that these geographically isolated places will remain sustainable year-round communities where people live and work and educate their children.

The Island Institute is encouraged that Governor Baldacci and other legislators are serious about reducing the state's property tax burden. No one understands the need to achieve property tax relief better than island communities, many of which have seen their property taxes triple during the past few years.

However, the consolidation proposals developed by the Governor and others threaten to dismantle island schools. Here is how:

- 1) The radically smaller size of island communities within the proposed super-districts will ensure that island schools will not be represented on super-district school boards
- 2) Island property taxes will be distributed to super-districts – super-districts are unlikely to redistribute adequate funds back to island schools
- 3) With island school boards abolished, island schools would likely lose the support of community members who currently hold these positions; the very same people who volunteer as nurses, physical education teacher, music teachers, janitors, substitute teachers, etc.
- 4) It is hard to imagine a superdistrict that would keep an island school open for very long.

By dismantling local control of island schools you could find yourself responsible for dismantling the very communities that have come to define Maine's coastal heritage as "the way life should be." Why would you cast aside the island communities that are so central to the state's identity... communities that the Brookings Institute study reminds us are the key to Maine's future?

Please consider what happens when Island Communities feel threatened. They organize for independence. They rally support in the press. They reach out to state and local government. They draw on their ample local leadership to prevail. Islanders see the threat of losing local control of their schools as nothing less than a call to arms to save their communities.

Islanders are currently engaged in a productive discussion about how to manage education costs. They understand the need to collaborate, working together for the past twenty years on professional development, college aspirations programming, sports programming, and more. Islanders are currently looking for additional ways to collaborate, but the current state process does not indicate a sincere interest in local solutions.

It is my hope that the Committees will recognize that island schools require unique solutions. The Island Institute is committed to supporting island schools as they work to develop these solutions and we encourage members of the Committees to engage with us in this discussion. If you don't call us, we will call you.

Sincerely,

Robert Snyder
Vice President of Programs
Island Institute

SCHOOL CONSOLIDATION

I want tax relief; however, I also want a quality education for my grandchildren. I have been a Central Office support staff employee for eleven years and know how much work goes into supporting our students and schools, so the teachers and principals can concentrate on the students in their building.

I have several concerns regarding consolidation, especially in regards to Governor Baldacci's proposal, which appears to be more radical than the others.

#1 For example, decreasing 152 to 26 districts seems extreme. The Board of Education Select Panel recommended 65 districts of only 3,000 – 4,000 students each with the larger districts remaining intact. Why does the Governor's plan differ? Why create a small region of 1,800 then mega regions of 15,000 – 20,000? How much personal attention will the schools and students receive from a regional office that is removed from the local community and trying to serve 20,000 students? Will these students become numbers?

#2 The term Central Office does not refer to superintendents alone. The proposed cuts include over 600 positions including secretaries, custodians, and others as well as over 600 teaching positions. Local Central Offices support the daily operations of the schools and student needs by addressing parental and staff concerns, program development and implementation, and doing paperwork. They are in touch with the local community.

Paperwork may not seem important. However, schools receive funding not only from local taxpayers but also from the federal government and Medicaid. However, there is a price tag attached to this revenue and that is the requirement that an unbelievable amount of paperwork be completed, especially in the area of special education. If the paperwork doesn't get done, Maine will lose this money. Where will the savings be then? If the teachers and principals aren't going to assume the paperwork, who is?

#3 What about the teachers? If we are trying to provide a better education for our students, why does the Governor's proposal eliminate over 600 teaching positions and increase class sizes? We need to engage our students in the lower grades or they will never make it to college.

#4 What about the employees many of whom have given 10 years or more to education? The Plant Closing Act provides severance pay for employees in private businesses. The Governor says that his plan does not reflect on the good work employees are doing, so why is he refusing severance pay? Does this plan save money at the expense of school employees who are also taxpayers? How does increased unemployment help the Maine economy?

I'll end this with asking you to please listen to what our educators are telling you. These people deal with education every day and are educators because they care about our students. Why not take what works in our current infrastructure and combine this with the best features of each proposal? A decision should be made only after all questions have been answered. Unless this happens, we will be dealing with the consequences later.

Thank you.

Patricia Dyer
84 Seavey Street
Westbrook, Maine 04092

Bonny Eagle School District - MSAD 6
Post Office Box 38, Bar Mills, Maine 04004-0038

TESTIMONY REGARDING LEGISLATIVE PROPOSALS RELATIVE TO SCHOOL
ADMINISTRATIVE UNIT CONSOLIDATION AND OTHER RELATED ISSUES

FEBRUARY 5, 2007

Senator Bowman, Representative Norton, Senator Rotundo, Representative Fisher, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs and the Appropriations and Financial Affairs Committee. My name is Suzanne Lukas and I serve as Superintendent of School Administrative District #6.

School Administrative District #6 is Maine's largest, with a student enrollment of just over 4000 and predicted growth to 4400 students over the next few years. Our district has served five southern Maine communities since 1959 and encompasses nine elementary schools, Maine's largest middle school and one of Maine's largest high schools.

The district operates at EPS levels of funding and sees no fiscal benefit to consolidation to a mega-district of more than 16000 students. We believe that we have been a model of fiscal responsibility and have already maximized the economies of scale sought through consolidation efforts. We see further consolidation as detrimental to serving our students and communities. Specifically we are gravely concerned about the hidden funding cuts in Governor Baldacci's Plan for Regionalization.

Much of the discussion of the governor's proposal focuses on fewer districts and savings on central office administrative costs. But it is the other savings tied to this proposal I would like to address. It is my understanding that the Governor's proposal has buried within it cuts in state spending for transportation, facilities and maintenance and special education.

First, SAD #6 manages the state's largest fleet of school buses. The fuel costs to drive 1.2 million miles per year have strained our budget and challenge us to find cuts to other necessary expenditures in order to deal with 150%-200% increases in diesel and gasoline. The Governor's proposal seeks to trim 5% from transportation budgets at a time when we are trying to cope with unprecedented increases in fuel costs. The transportation director's salary amounts to less than 2% of the department's budget. Where is it intended that we will realize savings?

Second, the Governor's Plan does not include any school closings but still calls for a 5% decrease in state funding for facilities costs. The need to maintain buildings and manage increased costs for both heating fuel and electricity will not diminish with regionalization. A decrease in this area of state funding is clearly a shift from state participation to local funding.

How can we operate the same number of sites at decreased costs for maintenance and operations?

Finally, proposed cuts to special education services ignore the promise to fully fund special education. The services given to special needs students are mandated by federal law and decisions surrounding these services are not controlled by school personnel. The 5% decrease in state funding for special education services will not be realized as a byproduct of regionalization. What is needed instead of decreased funding is incentives for regional programs – seed money for program planning, staffing, space, and transportation. Promises of savings in this area of educational spending are not realistic.

I encourage you to look closely at all proposals before you this legislative session and view each through the lens of what is best for Maine's children. Take a closer look at districts across the state where consolidation has worked and develop a clear vision for the type of organizations that provide reasonable cost savings over time without jeopardizing student transportation, special education services or the maintenance of school facilities.

Thank you for your kind attention to this important issue.

Suzanne Lukas
Superintendent of Schools
Maine School Administrative District #6

MAINE

PRINCIPALS'

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*MPA is an Equal
Opportunity Organization.*

TO: Joint Standing Committee on Education and
Cultural Affairs
Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and
Financial Affairs

FROM: Maine Principals' Association Legislative Committee

SUBJECT: School Regionalization Proposals

DATE: February 5, 2007

Presenting testimony on behalf the Maine Principals'
Association (MPA) today will be:

Harriet Trafford, MPA President and Principal at the Albert S.
Hall School in Waterville

Bob Stevens, MPA Past-president, Chair of the MPA
Legislative Committee and Principal at York High School
Jeanne Crocker, MPA Past-president, Member of the MPA
Legislative Committee and Principal at South Portland High
School

Dick Durost, MPA Executive Director, former Superintendent
and Principal in the Easton and Presque Isle school systems

Senator Bowman, Representative Norton, Senator Rotundo,
Representative Fischer and Distinguished Members of both
Committees.

The Maine Principals' Association represents more than 900
elementary, middle and secondary principals and assistant
principals, heads and assistant heads of schools, and career
and technical center directors and assistant directors at public
and private schools across the State of Maine.

We recognize the importance of the discussion regarding
regionalization and the political and financial reasons for
considering new ways to provide central office services. We
commend the Legislature and the Governor for initiating what
has been a difficult and often emotional debate. As you move
forward, please remember that the impact on student learning
and the ability of teachers, principals, superintendents and

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others to serve these students must be considered equally with the need to be fiscally responsible. We stand ready to work with you in any capacity as you enter work sessions to develop a final legislative proposal.

We urge you to consider some form of regional or state planning committees. A top down mandate will be much less likely to succeed than will a proposal that has had regional input from educators as well as municipal officers and taxpayers. We would appreciate the opportunity to recommend principals for any planning committees formed at either the state or regional levels. We particularly support language in LD 370 that suggests representation from both suburban and rural principals. Language in other bills that refers to "public school officials" is not clearly defined, especially if a caucus will be used to elect planning committee members. We ask, what positions qualify as "public school officials"?

We suggest that local and regional entities be given the opportunity to develop plans to meet financial constraints first. Then and only then should the Maine Department of Education (MDOE) or the legislature step in with a prescriptive consequence for either lack of effort or the failure to meet those constraints.

We request that regionalization be not just about school systems but that municipal and county governments be held to all the same expectations, whether voluntary or mandatory.

We suggest that the legislature demand more specific information regarding cost savings before any proposal is accepted. We fear that savings proposed by the Governor and others are not documented or realistic and will lead to taxpayer frustration when the savings do not match the projections.

If the final bill results in significantly fewer superintendents who have greater responsibilities and less time to support principals, we sincerely believe there will be a significant impact on principals and their ability to perform. Prior to the last twenty years, the principal was the manager of the building. In recent years, and for all the right reasons, the role of the principal has changed dramatically as the principal's duties now include

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greatly increased responsibilities as instructional leader. If the superintendent of the future is thirty miles away and responsible for 20 to 40 schools, the principal will become the perceived "superintendent" in that community. If an "advisory council" has any governance responsibilities, the principal's ability to give proper attention to students and staff will be greatly diminished. The number of educators willing to enter the candidate pool for principalships is already at an all-time low, especially for high schools and middle schools. When principals urge teachers with administrative potential to consider becoming an administrator, too often the reply is "Why would I want to do what you do?" We need to ensure that qualified and capable leaders will step forward for this most important position in every building, thereby making the job doable.

If language is included that provides funding for a full time principal at every school, please consider similar language regarding assistant principals. This will become especially important if superintendents become further removed from their ability to provide support for principals or if advisory councils have any governance role at the local level. Either of these situations will require principals to take on some of the responsibilities currently held by the superintendent and will require additional assistance in managing the building as well as in the role of instructional leader.

If language is included that carries forward all existing contracts for teachers and superintendents until those contracts expire, we would suggest that principals' contracts must be carried forward as well. Additionally, present central office personnel should not be permitted to "bump" building administrators from their positions.

In present law there is language regarding a process for closing elementary schools that includes a vote by the community or communities served by that school. This language needs to be expanded to include a similar process for closing middle and secondary schools. This will ensure that local citizens whose children will be affected by any future school closings will have the option of closing a school or paying the difference locally to keep the school open.

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We urge that additional and significant professional development funds be provided for administrators and teachers in order to ensure that changes in central office support will not adversely affect teaching and learning.

While recognizing and agreeing with the need to move forward, we urge caution so that changes receive the proper amount of analysis and that unintended consequences remain at a minimum. The recent proposal to eliminate local assessment systems (LAS) is an example of a plan that was approved and implemented too quickly and became an unwieldy albatross that had to be addressed.

If larger districts become the norm, we believe that fewer superintendents leading larger districts will demand higher salaries. Larger districts with teachers negotiating common contracts for more people will expect that no teachers receive a decrease in salary. Salaries in new, blended contracts will move upward, not toward the average. Increased costs for salaries will more than likely offset any administrative savings.

There is no disagreement that the number of central office administrators has increased in the last 10 to 15 years. However, during that time the number of Maine Department of Education staff positions has been decimated by as much as half, and combined with the impact of Maine Learning Results and No Child Left Behind, future districts may be hard pressed to eliminate administrative positions and still serve students, parents and staff.

We suggest that municipal school systems and other types of school systems be treated equally. LD 370 appears to have language that would permit most municipal school systems to continue without consolidation but would require all other types to reconfigure in different combinations than before.

There has been a great deal of rhetoric around the statistic that last year 81% of our school systems found it necessary, by local vote, to exceed the local funding portion established by EPS. Perhaps the case might be made that this is more a reflection of the inadequacies of EPS than of the actions of irresponsible taxpayers, schools committees and educators.

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Finally, we strongly urge that any mention of school choice be removed from the discussion of regionalization. School choice is a fundamental issue of equitable education for all as well as one of philosophy and politics. If school choice needs to be debated, it should rise to the level of a stand-alone bill, not as an afterthought inserted in the budget.

Once again, the MPA stands ready to contribute to the work sessions and to whatever forms of planning committees, etc. that may be part of the final legislation. We recognize the difficulty of your task and wish you well.

Members of the Lewiston Legislative delegation, I'm Prudy Grant, Chairperson of the Lisbon School Committee. We welcome this opportunity to come before you again to explain what we'd really like to have as an outcome in this consolidation discussion.

Unlike most other towns in Maine, Lisbon is a growing community probably because our property values are lower than those of Durham, Topsham, Brunswick and other coastal communities. We still represent small town life so young couples or families settle in our town and purchase the new houses which are much more affordable for them. From those young couples come young children who will grow and enter our school system. Our new elementary school is already overcrowded and the School Committee is faced with the problem of having to decide where the 6th grade will go. The town is predicting the construction of hundreds of new housing units over the next few years. If nothing is done to limit construction, the impact on local schools will be enormous.

On February 5th I testified on behalf of the Lisbon School Committee concerning the conditions under which we'd prefer consolidation if it is necessary. I stand by that testimony but because our situation is unlike that of many other towns, tonight I want to propose an alternative for School Departments such as Lisbon's.

Because Lisbon is already achieving the desired efficiencies and economies. Our Central Office per pupil expenditure is \$286, just about where I heard Commissioner Gendron comment before the Education Committee on Thursday of last week that she had expanded her level of acceptable expenditures. Unlike many towns, our figures include all the areas which ought to be covered under Central Office costs: Curriculum Coordination, Nutrition, Transportation, Technology, and Business Management. Our Superintendent and we School Committee members are ever aware of the need to present a very cost-conscious budget and have succeeded in doing that for the past several years.

Lisbon taxpayers are not unlike taxpayers in the rest of the state; they want tax reductions and did pass TABOR, but those issues aside, they also consistently support programs and services that make our school costs exceed EPS levels. Originally the EPS figure was a target beyond which towns could spend for items and programs they valued; now it appears that EPS figures are considered to be a mandate. That is troublesome since Lisbon taxpayers have repeatedly chosen to spend extra dollars on programs dear to their hearts. Do not even consider doing away with or reducing athletics; a strong athletic program has been a hallmark of Lisbon since I first started teaching there in 1965. Many have jokingly referred to Lisbon as "jock city". Joking aside, that athletic heritage is important to preserve. Additionally, Lisbon voters have elected to have more school nurses than the state says is necessary and willingly pay those costs.

Because Lisbon has already achieved the desired efficiencies and economy of scale, we would request to be left alone to continue those good works which

we've already begun. We've been approached by a nearby school system to enter into cooperative relationships and sharing of Central Office staff. Our payroll is done in-house at a very minimal cost. Last week I listened to Philip Trostel present his research which had been done before the Governor's bill or this consolidation movement was even discussed. He cautioned that expanding without boundaries, which could occur with a joining of school systems, does not always produce decreasing costs. He said that "both larger or smaller are not always better." Because he has no horse in this race as do other statisticians, I took his point of view to be without bias. Based on his comments, I placed my school system, Lisbon, in the category of those school systems which are already doing very well. From there I extrapolated that tinkering with what already is being done well might end up in a mess which could even be more costly or have other negative down sides. It is important to avoid the Law of Unintended Consequences.

Sadly, we are already experiencing some of those unintended consequences. In the past few days, two valuable and experienced members of the Central Office staff have submitted their resignations out of fear that their jobs will be cut. They believe they must enter the job market immediately before it is flooded with the castaways from consolidated systems. That is indeed unfortunate, but it's also going to be difficult to replace them in this atmosphere of uncertainty about future job security. We would ask that a decision be made promptly to avoid more bailouts or that such employees be reassured that hasty decisions are not in their best interest.

I hope you will consider the option for a school system to stay as it is when there is little need for major additional savings because those economies have already been achieved and because our enrollment is increasing.

Thank you.

School Consolidation Plan Flunks Some Basic Tests

By Rep. Rich Cebra

Governor John Baldacci's plan to consolidate 290 school districts into 26 new regional districts – a plan buried in the middle of his 2008-2009 state budget – has sparked a wildfire of anger, confusion and anxiety that has spread rapidly across Maine as the details sink in.

I have received a lot of phone calls asking about this plan, and asking where I stand on the subject of school consolidation. As you might know by now, schools in my district would be split into two regions. Bridgton would anchor Region 22, which also includes Naples and Casco. But Poland would jump to Region 18, to be combined with Lewiston, Auburn, Turner, Litchfield, Mechanic Falls, Durham, and a few other towns.

First, I want to commend the governor for attempting a move towards regional cooperation to save money. According to him, the plan would save \$250 million over three years. Obviously, saving that kind of money would be a good thing. It would not, however, reduce property taxes. In fact, the governor has already "booked" these potential savings and has already spent them. In other words, these unrealized savings have been counted as real savings, and they will be used to fund state programs. They are already in the budget. This whole massive change will not lower property taxes, and that was never the goal. The goal is to "free up" money for other things, such as our huge welfare and Medicaid programs.

Beyond that, I have some other serious problems with this new arrangement, scheduled to take effect in 18 months. The governor's plan is a one-size-fits-all, state-mandated solution that strips us of local control while moving us toward creating another level of bureaucracy.

The plan does not take into account school operations that local districts have managed to make efficient. Nor does it provide a mechanism to preserve current efficiencies. What it does do, with a heavy hand, is lump current school districts together and cut their state funding, then hope that things work out. Bigger districts aren't necessarily better or, for that matter, less expensive. They are just bigger.

Looking back at recent history and observing Maine state government in action, I am a firm believer that there is a real need to consolidate services at a regional level. How we go about that consolidation is the real issue.

Speaking to a local group recently, I outlined a plan for Regional Cooperative Organizations (RCOs), which would provide a structure for local government to cooperate with neighboring local governments when and where it makes sense and could be fiscally beneficial.

All towns need to perform certain functions, such as public safety, waste management, purchasing, human resources, recreation and education. The plan would provide a framework where local governments could enter into these districts, pay for services as needed and eliminate a great amount of redundancy. RCOs would provide real relief for taxpayers while continuing or enhancing services.

We don't need half-baked schemes from the governor to take action locally that makes sense. The objective here, for us, is to reduce property taxes while maintaining top-notch schools. We can do both. Local officials and school boards need to sit down with each other and figure out which services and operations can be streamlined and combined to save us all some money. Classroom instruction would not be affected.

I also have heard from people who say, "At least the governor is doing something." I disagree with that philosophy of government. Poorly devised action is not good government. Rushing sweeping changes through in a budget instead of through the legislative process denies the taxpayer the proper airing of opinions and gives us poor laws. Look at LD 1 as an example of this, and you will see what happens when big changes in government are rushed through a one-party government system. Invariably, we end up worse off.

One organization has done a great job in offering an alternative to the governor's plan – the Maine Heritage Policy Center. Their approach would establish Education Service Districts, and would achieve savings in administration while protecting local control and parental involvement. I would recommend anyone who is interested in consolidation to take a look at that plan. It is available at www.mainepolicy.org.

I have already distributed a copy of that plan to the entire Legislature and will be lobbying hard for its consideration.

Logical, well thought out consolidation can work for the good of us all, not just in education but at all levels of government. Our Naples-Casco Bulky Waste Facility is a good example. Compared to the alternatives, it has been a great cost-saver for our region.

This is the sort of model we need to follow to get costs under control so people are not tax-valued out of their homes. We don't need the state to tell us what to do. Meanwhile, we need to guard against surrendering our local control to state bureaucracies. Let me close with a warning from author Russell Kirk: "The readiness of democratic states to concentrate in the central government all real power soon poisons at the root true democracy, which is a product of local institutions and self-reliance. Consolidation is the instrument of despotism."

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REMARKS CONCERNING SCHOOL
ADMINISTRATIVE REORGANIZATION
MONDAY, FEBRUARY 5, 2007

SENATOR BOWMAN, REPRESENTATIVE NORTON, SENATOR ROTUNDO, REPRESENTATIVE FISCHER AND MEMBERS OF THE JOINT STANDING COMMITTEES ON EDUCATION AND CULTURAL AFFAIRS AND APPROPRIATIONS AND FINANCIAL AFFAIRS, MY NAME IS SKIP GREENLAW. I LIVE IN STONINGTON AND HAVE SERVED ON THE DEER ISLE- STONINGTON CSD SCHOOL COMMITTEE FOR 18 OF THE PAST 23 YEARS.

LET ME BEGIN BY IMPLORING YOU NOT TO ADOPT ANY LEGISLATION WHICH WILL ADVERSELY AFFECT THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION MAINE SCHOOLS ARE CURRENTLY PROVIDING OUR STUDENTS.

IT WAS NOT UNTIL I READ AN EDITORIAL BY TODD BENOIT IN SATURDAY'S BANGOR DAILY NEWS THAT I HAD A CLEAR UNDERSTANDING OF THE NEED TO REORGANIZE SCHOOL ADMINISTRATIVE DISTRICTS. BENOIT WROTE THAT THE NUMBER OF STUDENTS IN MAINE WILL DROP FROM 225,000 IN 1980 TO 182,000 IN 2010 WITHOUT ANY CHANGE IN THE NUMBER OF ADMINISTRATIVE DISTRICTS. (OF COURSE, I ASSUME THAT THE FIGURES HE USES ARE CORRECT.)

OUR CSD STUDENT POPULATION HAS DROPPED BY 125 OVER THE LAST SIX YEARS FROM APPROXIMATELY 575 TO 452. AS A SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEMBER, I HAVE OFFERED SUGGESTIONS TO REDUCE OUR BUDGET AS WE WERE EXPERIENCING A 22% REDUCTION IN STUDENT ENROLLMENT. WHILE THERE HAVE BEEN SOME REDUCTIONS, THERE HAVE NOT BEEN ANYWHERE NEAR THE REDUCTIONS TO CORRESPOND TO THE DROP IN ENROLLMENT. ENOUGH SAID. I UNDERSTAND.

I AM OPPOSED TO FOLDING THE CURRENT 152 ADMINISTRATIVE DISTRICTS INTO 26 REGIONAL DISTRICTS AS PROPOSED IN GOVERNOR BALDACCİ'S BILL. IT SEEMS TO ME THAT SUCH A REORGANIZATION WILL DESTROY THE CONCEPT OF LOCAL CONTROL AND LOCAL INVOLVEMENT IN MANY OF OUR MORE RURAL SCHOOLS. IT IS NOT CLEAR TO ME WHETHER THAT CONCEPT IS AS IMPORTANT TO PARENTS AND TAXPAYERS IN MAINE'S URBAN COMMUNITIES OR EVEN A CITY AS BIG AS ELLSWORTH. HOWEVER, MAKE NO MISTAKE, IT IS IMPORTANT TO PARENTS AND TAXPAYERS IN DEER ISLE, STONINGTON, SEDGWICK, AND BROOKLIN, WHICH MAKE UP SCHOOL UNION 76.

SO WHAT IS THE MAGIC NUMBER WHICH EVERYONE CAN SUPPORT? I AM NOT CERTAIN. HOWEVER, I AM CERTAIN THAT THE GOVERNOR AND THE LEGISLATURE CANNOT MAKE THAT DECISION UNILATERALLY WITHOUT A LOT OF INPUT AND CREATIVE THINKING AND SUGGESTIONS FROM THE ENTIRE EDUCATION COMMUNITY. IF YOU WANT THE EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY WHICH CURRENTLY EXISTS FOR OUR STUDENTS TO CONTINUE, YOU NEED TO ENGAGE ALL MAINE CITIZENS TO HELP MAKE THAT DECISION.

THE GOVERNOR HAS SAID THAT HE IS WILLING TO LISTEN TO OTHER PROPOSALS. ENGAGE THE CREATIVE SPIRIT OF MAINE'S EDUCATIONAL COMMUNITY AND TAXPAYERS. IN YOUR FIRST WORK SESSION ON THESE BILLS, WOULD YOU PLEASE SERIOUSLY CONSIDER THIS SUGGESTION.

1. CHALLENGE THE SUPERINTENDENTS, SCHOOL BOARDS, FACULTY, PARENTS, AND TAXPAYERS TO MEET WITH OTHER SCHOOL ADMINISTRATIVE UNITS WITH THE GOAL IN MIND OF BRINGING ABOUT SIGNIFICANT REORGANIZATION OF SCHOOL ADMINISTRATIVE DISTRICTS IN THEIR AREA.

2. GIVE THEM A DEADLINE OF OCTOBER 1, 2007 TO SUBMIT TO THE DEPARTMENT AND/OR YOUR COMMITTEES DETAILED PROPOSALS FOR REORGANIZATION OF EXISTING ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES TOGETHER WITH A SPECIFIC LISTING OF POTENTIAL COST SAVINGS.

3. THE ABOVE RECOMMENDATION NEEDS TO BE ACCOMPANIED BY A POSITIVE VOTE FROM ALL THE COMMUNITIES WHO HAVE AGREED TO CONSOLIDATE INTO A LARGER ADMINISTRATIVE UNIT. IF YOU NEED TO PASS ENABLING LEGISLATION TO ALLOW THIS TO HAPPEN, PLEASE DO SO. WHILE WE WOULD LIKE TO HAVE THESE NEW ADMINISTRATIVE UNITS BECOME OPERATIONAL ON JULY 1, 2008, THE DEADLINE MAY NEED TO BE EXTENDED TO JULY 1, 2009 FOR OBVIOUS REASONS.

4. THE TWO COMMITTEES OUGHT TO CONTINUE THEIR WORK ON THESE BILLS AS IF THE EDUCATIONAL COMMUNITY WAS NOT PROCEEDING AS SUGGESTED ABOVE. REPORT YOUR WORK OUT OF COMMITTEES AS YOU WOULD NORMALLY AND DEBATE THE BILLS ON THE FLOOR OF THE HOUSE AND THE SENATE. IF THE BILL GETS TO THE ENACTMENT STAGE, TABLE IT IN THE SENATE UNTIL THE END OF THE SESSION.

5. IN JUNE, TAKE A READING ABOUT WHAT PROGRESS IS BEING MADE ON CONSOLIDATION OF THE VARIOUS UNITS. IF A SIGNIFICANT NUMBER OF UNITS ARE MAKING GOOD PROGRESS, THEN CONSIDER HOLDING THE BILL OVER TO A SPECIAL SESSION AFTER OCTOBER 1. CONVENE A SPECIAL SESSION IN OCTOBER AND DETERMINE WHAT COURSE OF ACTION IS NECESSARY. IF MY INTUITIVE, CREATIVE SUGGESTION HAS FALLEN FLAT ON ITS FACE, YOU WILL HAVE A BILL YOU CAN ENACT TO ACCOMPLISH THE GOALS OF CONSOLIDATION YOU SEE AS NECESSARY.

I HAVE CONFIDENCE IN THE CREATIVE GENIUS OF MAINE PEOPLE. WE WOULD RATHER DO IT OURSELVES THAN HAVE IT FORCED UPON US BY THE LEGISLATURE. I HAVE SAT IN YOUR SEAT IN THREE LEGISLATURES FROM 1973 THROUGH 1978. I HAVE SERVED ON TWO SCHOOL FUNDING COMMISSIONS IN 1975 AND 1992. I UNDERSTAND ALL TOO WELL HOW DIFFICULT THESE DECISIONS ARE TO MAKE ON A STATEWIDE BASIS WITH A COOKIE-CUTTER MOLD, WHICH IS SUPPOSED TO MEET THE NEEDS OF LARGE URBAN SYSTEMS AS WELL AS SMALLER RURAL UNITS. IT CANNOT BE DONE SUCCESSFULLY, IN MY OPINION, WITH ONE APPROACH FITS ALL. WE ARE NOT TWO MAINES- ONE SOUTH AND ONE THE REST OF THE STATE. WE ARE MANY MAINES WITH DIFFERENT IDEAS AND METHODS ABOUT HOW WE OPERATE OUR SCHOOLS. THEY ARE ALL VALID AS LONG AS THEY MEET THE NEEDS OF OUR STUDENTS.

PLEASE GIVE US THIS OPPORTUNITY TO PROVE THAT WE CAN STEP UP TO THE PLATE, FORM LARGER ADMINISTRATIVE DISTRICTS, AND IDENTIFY SIGNIFICANT COST SAVINGS.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION. I'LL BE GLAD TO ANSWER ANY QUESTIONS YOU HAVE.



O.F.P.R.

2007 MAR -1 AM 11:20

Biddeford School Department

RESOLUTION

Consolidation of Maine School Districts

We, the members of the Biddeford School Committee, support well-planned efforts to encourage the efficient delivery of educational services through cooperation among school units, regional delivery of administrative functions and sound school unit consolidation. However, we are writing to express our deep concerns about the current proposals to decrease the number of school districts in Maine. While we are still seeking more information on the proposals, we believe that the proposals as written would have significant negative impact throughout the state.

Larger school districts would dilute local influence over the schools. Biddeford, for example, with the proposed addition of Saco, Old Orchard Beach, Dayton, Arundel, Kennebunk and Kennebunkport would see its district almost triple in size and come under the aegis of a 15-member regional school committee. We believe there must be some staff structure between a regional superintendent and school administrators. That link must be amenable to some degree of local influence.

In addition, ***Biddeford would be threatened with a reduction in federal funding*** under the No Child Left Behind Act because the city would be grouped with its mostly wealthier neighbors and federal funding is based on the number of reduced price and free lunches served.

The Governor's proposal does not show the sources of a projected \$250 million in administrative savings.

The proposed 26 regions are unbalanced as to the number of students and some involve unreasonable transportation distances.

The hastily developed proposal provides little time or opportunity for an orderly transition.

The proposal is unfair to long-term employees whose jobs might be eliminated without severance pay.

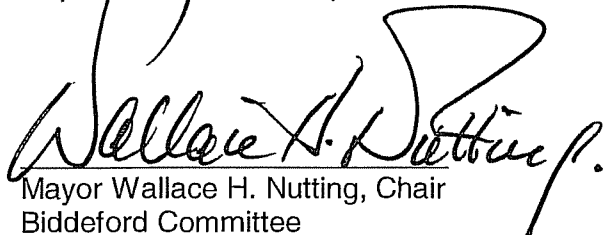
Thus far, there is no provision in this unfolding process for local voter approval, a hallmark of the evolution of Maine's educational system.

Some of the member districts in the proposed Region 25, including representatives of the Biddeford district, have been meeting and will continue to collaborate to develop mutually agreeable goals and identify both administrative and logistic services which could logically and effectively be consolidated. Through this process, we believe we can enhance educational opportunities in our area and realize cost savings while preserving an appropriate degree of local influence. It is our intention to advise you on the consolidation path this group chooses to follow.

We would appreciate your keeping us fully informed as various consolidation proposals move through the legislative process. Thank you for your consideration.

By a unanimous vote in a meeting held February 27, 2007, the School Committee of Biddeford hereby adopts this Resolution in opposition to the Governor's school reorganization plan.

Further voted: That the Chair transmit this Resolution to the appropriate Senators, Representatives and representatives of the local media.



Mayor Wallace H. Nutting, Chair
Biddeford Committee

Biddeford School Committee Members

Margaret Bean	Deirdre Catlett
Penny Beaupre	Howard Hanson
Patricia Boston	Robert Melville
Daniel Boucher	

LR 1619 – Sen. Rotundo

Sec. 1. Bipartisan School Redistricting Panel established. Resolved: That the Bipartisan School Redistricting Panel, referred to in this section as "the panel," is established. The membership and duties of the panel consist of the following.

1. The panel consists of 11 members appointed as follows:
 - A. One registered member of the political party holding the largest number of seats in the Legislature, appointed by the Governor;
 - B. One registered member of the political party holding the 2nd largest number of seats in the Legislature, appointed by the Governor;
 - C. One registered member of the political party holding the largest number of seats in the Legislature, appointed by the President of the Senate;
 - D. One registered member of the political party holding the 2nd largest number of seats in the Legislature, appointed by the President of the Senate;
 - E. One registered member of the political party holding the largest number of seats in the Legislature, appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives;
 - F. One registered member of the political party holding the 2nd largest number of seats in the Legislature, appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives;
 - G. One member of the State Board of Education, appointed by the Chair of the State Board of Education;
 - H. One member representing the Maine Municipal Association;
 - I. Two members of the Maine School Management Association; and
 - J. One Maine Teacher of the Year, appointed by the Maine Education Association.
2. The first-named registered member of the political party holding the largest number of seats in the Legislature and the first-named registered member of the political party holding the 2nd largest number of seats in the Legislature are the chairs of the panel.
3. All appointments must be made no later than 30 days following the effective date of this resolve. The appointing authorities shall notify the Executive Director of the Legislative Council once all appointments have been completed. Within 15 days after appointment of all members, the chairs of the panel shall call and convene the first meeting of the panel.
4. The panel shall redraw the boundaries of the State's school administrative units so that each unit serves between 3,000 and 4,000 students while keeping intact school administrative units that currently serve at least 3,000 students and giving priority to retaining community integrity, current school administrative unit integrity and transportation issues.

5. The Legislative Council shall provide necessary staffing services to the panel.

6. A legislative member of the panel is entitled to receive the legislative per diem, as defined in the Maine Revised Statutes, Title 3, section 2, and reimbursement for travel and other necessary expenses related to the member's attendance at authorized meetings of the panel. Public members not otherwise compensated by their employers or other entities that they represent are entitled to receive reimbursement of necessary expenses and, upon a demonstration of financial hardship, a per diem equal to the legislative per diem for their attendance at authorized meetings of the panel.

7. No later than December 5, 2007, the panel shall submit a report that includes its findings and recommendations, including suggested legislation, to the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs. The panel is authorized to introduce legislation related to its report to the Second Regular Session of the 123rd Legislature at the time of submission of its report. The Legislature intends that the school redistricting plan submitted to it by the panel pursuant to this section become law in substantively the same form as it is submitted.

8. If the panel requires a limited extension of time to complete its study and make its report, it may apply to the Legislative Council, which may grant an extension.

9. The chairs of the panel, with assistance from the panel staff, shall administer the panel's budget. Within 10 days after its first meeting, the panel shall present a work plan and proposed budget to the Legislative Council for its approval. The panel may not incur expenses that would result in the panel's exceeding its approved budget. Upon request from the panel, the Executive Director of the Legislative Council shall promptly provide the panel chairs and staff with a status report on the panel budget, expenditures incurred and paid and available funds; and be it further

Sec. 2. Department of Education to create student investment account program. Resolved: That the Department of Education shall develop a student investment account program, referred to in this section as "the program," for safe and cost-effective investment accounts for students in the State. Under the program, the department shall establish an investment account upon the birth of every child in the State and shall provide an initial investment of \$200 in each account. Proceeds of accounts created under the program are payable to residents of the State for postsecondary education undertaken at institutions of higher learning located in the State. The Department of Education shall submit the program in the form of legislation to the Second Regular Session of the 123rd Legislature no later than December 5, 2007; and be it further

Sec. 3. Department of Education to create postsecondary tuition assistance program. Resolved: That the Department of Education shall develop a postsecondary tuition assistance program, referred to in this section as "the program," that provides a graduate of an approved secondary school in the State who is admitted to a postsecondary institution in the State that offers an associate degree or bachelor's degree with an amount equaling 50% of the tuition for 2 years of the average tuition of the Maine Community College System if the graduate demonstrates financial need. The

department shall establish criteria to demonstrate financial need for purposes of this section. The program must provide that a graduate under the program who elects to pursue teacher certification and commits to teaching in the State for 3 years after graduation is eligible to receive an additional amount equaling 50% of the average tuition of the Maine Community College System for the graduate's junior and senior year at the postsecondary institution in the State. The program may also include other forms of financial aid. The Department of Education shall submit the program in the form of legislation to the Second Regular Session of the 123rd Legislature no later than December 5, 2007; and be it further

Sec. 4. Department of Education and University of Maine System to offer leadership training institutes. Resolved: That the Department of Education and the University of Maine System shall jointly offer leadership training institutes for teachers and school administrators in the State. The institutes must focus on the skills of change agency and strategic planning and the necessary background in organizational, human resource and financial management to meet the challenges of the future. The teachers and administrators shall attend institutes in groups called cohorts. A cohort under this section must gather for a week in each of 2 succeeding summers to perform follow-up work on real leadership issues facing schools in Maine. The Department of Education shall adopt rules that require a school administrator to participate in an institute created under this section every 5 years as a condition of recertification under the Maine Revised Statutes, Title 20-A, chapter 502; and be it further

Sec. 5. School administrative unit plan for targeted funds to include wireless devices for students. Resolved: That a school administrative unit plan for targeted funds pursuant to the Maine Revised Statutes, Title 20-A, section 15671, subsection 7 must provide that each student from 9th grade to 12th grade in that school administrative unit receives an individual wireless device that the student may take home every day and have for use during a summer vacation; and be it further

Sec. 6. Rules. Resolved: That the Department of Education may adopt rules to carry out the purposes of this resolve. Rules adopted pursuant to this section are major substantive rules pursuant to the Maine Revised Statutes, Title 5, chapter 375, subchapter 2-A.

SUMMARY

This resolve:

1. Creates the Bipartisan School Redistricting Panel to redraw school administrative units to eliminate all units that serve under 3,000 students;
2. Directs the Department of Education to create a student investment account program that creates investment accounts for each child born in the State for use by residents for postsecondary education at institutions of higher learning located in the State and endows each account with \$200;

3. Directs the Department of Education to create a tuition assistance program in which each graduating high school student who demonstrates financial need and is accepted into an associate's or bachelor's program in a postsecondary institution in the State will receive an amount equal to 50% of the average tuition for 2 years at the Maine Community College System, and those students pursuing teaching certificates and committing to teaching in the State for 3 years after graduation will receive an additional 50% of the average tuition for 2 years at the Maine Community College System for their junior and senior years;

4. Directs the Department of Education and the University of Maine System to administer leadership training institutes for teachers and school administrators and requires school administrators to attend the institute every 5 years as a requirement for recertification; and

5. Directs that school administrative units provide for individual wireless devices for 9th to 12th graders as part of their plans submitted to receive targeted funds for technology.

Testimony to the Appropriations and Financial Affairs Committee
of the Maine Legislature
February 5, 2007
Gordon A. Donaldson, Jr.
Professor of Education, University of Maine

Thank you for the opportunity to remark on the bills and proposals before you that seek to find efficiencies in our public education system.

I submit that **no bill before you stands on a solid foundation** of information that documents carefully where specific inefficiencies in the current system exist. Furthermore, none makes a clear, well-supported case that centralizing control over educational and administrative functions will bring the tax-payers of Maine substantial relief. In short, it would be **unwise to set a budget for the next biennium** assuming savings projected on such poor data and faulty reasoning.

Why? In a nutshell, because data from the National Center for Education Statistics show that:

- ❖ Maine spent on average \$225 per pupil **LESS** than the national average on administration, student support services, instructional support services, and management services combined between 1999 and 2003;
- ❖ Maine spends a smaller proportion of its education budget on administration than 46 other states;
- ❖ Maine falls consistently at the bottom with New Hampshire in expenditure comparisons with the other states in the New England/New York region – the region that determines many of our economic conditions, including our higher-than-average costs of living and doing business.
- ❖ These bills suggest that large savings will result from simply reducing and reshuffling school district designations; the savings to be had in this manner are simply too small to make the kind of differences advertised.

In sum, the data simply don't justify the claim that "Maine schools are over-administered". Neither do the solutions justify the claims that huge savings will result.

I believe that efficiencies can be found in our system, however. In this regard, I would make three recommendations to the Committee – three points to keep in mind as you weigh in on these vital decisions.

First: Efficiencies are not found through wholesale "makeovers" or by forcing all towns and regions into a single template. We achieve efficiencies by identifying where the inefficiencies are, justifying those in a transparent way, and directly and honestly addressing the problem. All Maine schools and school districts are not inefficient. My research shows that on the whole our support staffing system is a lean one when compared to most other states.

A truly “bold” approach – that is an honest and courageous one – is to go directly to those towns and districts that we can identify as “inefficient”, explain where the inefficiencies are, and assist them to change. I cannot imagine that taxpayers in those locations wouldn’t see the sense in that.

(Efforts to find regional efficiencies ARE currently underway – and have been for some time – in Aroostook County, the Penquis Region, SAD 47/Waterville/Winslow, Rockland/Thomaston, Washington County. Most such efforts have virtually no assistance from the state.)

I urge you to support those proposals that document inefficiencies and create specific mechanisms to address them.

Second: We will not improve efficiency if we reduce cost AND REDUCE QUALITY. High quality in education is, ironically, not largely affected by the amount of money we spend but by what we spend it on. We create and sustain high quality education by:

- a. **Placing the responsibility with teachers, principals, and parents, encouraging their creativity and discretion, and supplying enough resources to do the best they can for every one of their children; and by**
- b. **Engaging local citizens and parents in ensuring quality by demanding accountability, one child at a time, one budget at a time.**

It’s time Maine got smart and understood that the state’s efforts to improve schools through legislative requirements and accountability and through administrative letters and prescriptions consistently fall short. As you can tell by visiting any school in your district, many of these “solutions” have in fact proven to be wasteful – because they have taken teachers’, administrators’, and students’ attention and time away from the core work of learning and teaching.

(One example: The MEA’s, a multi-million dollar investment that has NEVER provided feedback to teachers, parents, and kids that was useful in improving the learning of any child. Indeed, districts are now spending MORE OF THEIR OWN money on testing to get immediate feedback they can use!).

I urge you to support only those bills and proposals that minimize government interference in the legitimate professional work of educators and the vital roles of parents.

Third: Centralizing control over educational functions has NOT proved to contain costs and enhance quality.

- ❖ **Regions of the country with more centralized bureaucracies have higher administrative and other non-instructional staff costs and lower achievement scores than Maine and New England.**

- ❖ Large, centralized districts spawn special-interest-group politics and the whole system of decision-making becomes more costly and contentious.
- ❖ Several bills before you – including the one promoted by the Department of Education – will create more distant, less accountable school boards and administrators. Restructuring of this kind has gone on in this country for decades. Here is what two authorities say has resulted:

“Local education bureaucracies have grown larger and increasingly complex, particularly after the advent of federal and state programs... They have been criticized for being unresponsive to community needs and for being incapable of educating children.... [T]he influence of parents, students, and local residents over the education of children is quite limited and they often feel disenfranchised and powerless. ...[A]t all levels, they are begging for relief. The [district] does not provide an effective avenue for them to express their interests in their children’s education. “

Thomas Corcoran and Margaret Goertz. (in *The Public Schools*, S. Fuhrman and M. Lazerson, Eds. 2005; Oxford University Press). p. 33

- ❖ Reformers have been saying for some time now: “Take apart these wasteful, ineffective bureaucracies. Return accountability directly to the client: parents and citizens. Attract the very best educators support them in doing their best work.” This has been the central thrust of reforms in many places, among them the city of **Chicago, the state of West Virginia, and the entire national system in England.**

In short, as you deliberate, consider what aspects of the education enterprise CAN be centralized and coordinated for savings and what aspects will do permanent damage to the quality of our system if they are centralized. I have included a useful summary of these in my materials (see “What Can be Centralized and What Cannot...”).

In closing, I am convinced that we can make our system leaner, but I remain highly skeptical of any proposal that summarily redistricts all of Maine and claims that “great savings” will result. To base any budget or any promise of tax relief on such quicksand would be unwise.

Thank you for your time. I have attached with my testimony a copy of my report and of the testimony I gave to the Education Committee last Thursday. I hope they will be useful to you.

Gordon A. Donaldson, Jr.
Professor of Education
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Attachments:

Testimony presented to the Committee on Educational and Cultural Affairs, Feb. 1, 2007
"Pursuing Administrative Efficiency in Maine", G. Donaldson, 2006

What Can Be Centralized?

What school district functions can and cannot be centralized if **high quality is to be maintained and enhanced while costs remain manageable** for the citizens of Maine? (for summary explanations, see *What Can be Centralized and What Must Remain Decentralized?* Donaldson, 2007)

<u>School District Functions</u>	<u>Can It Be "Safely" Centralized ? *</u>
Financials: accounting/purchasing	Largely
Plant Management & Transportation	Substantially
Specialized educational staff & services	Somewhat
Fiscal and Educational Policy and Planning	Somewhat
Contract Negotiations	Somewhat
Public Information and Political Responsiveness	Very little
Student Instruction and Management	No
School Climate and Leadership	No
Community Participation and Support	No

- "Centralized" in the sense promoted by the Local Schools, Regional Services Initiative (26 districts ranging in geographic size considerably and in enrollment from 2000 to 20,000)

**Chart 1. Average Annual Per Pupil Expenditures: U.S.,
New England/NY, and Maine, 1999 - 2003**

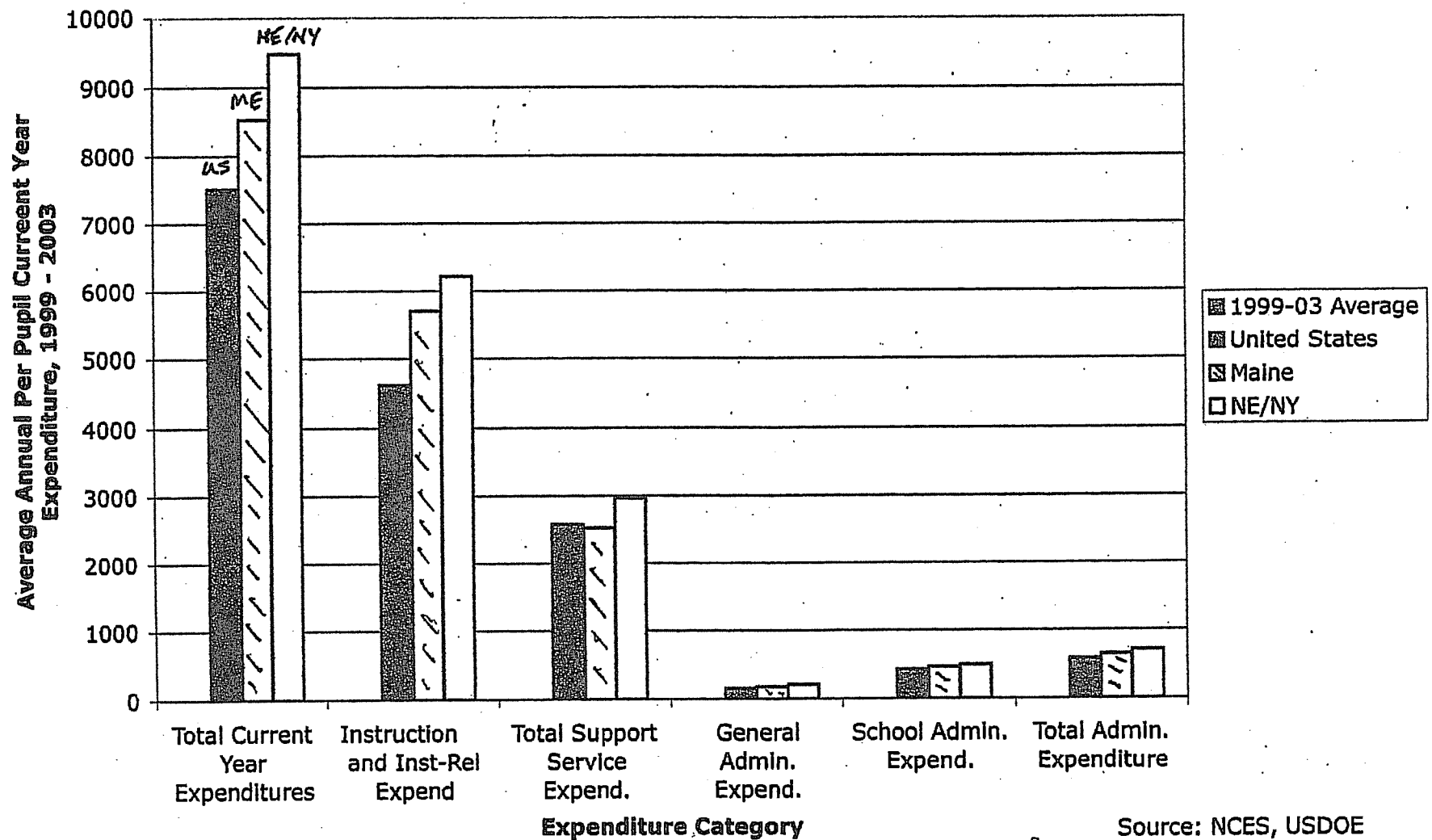
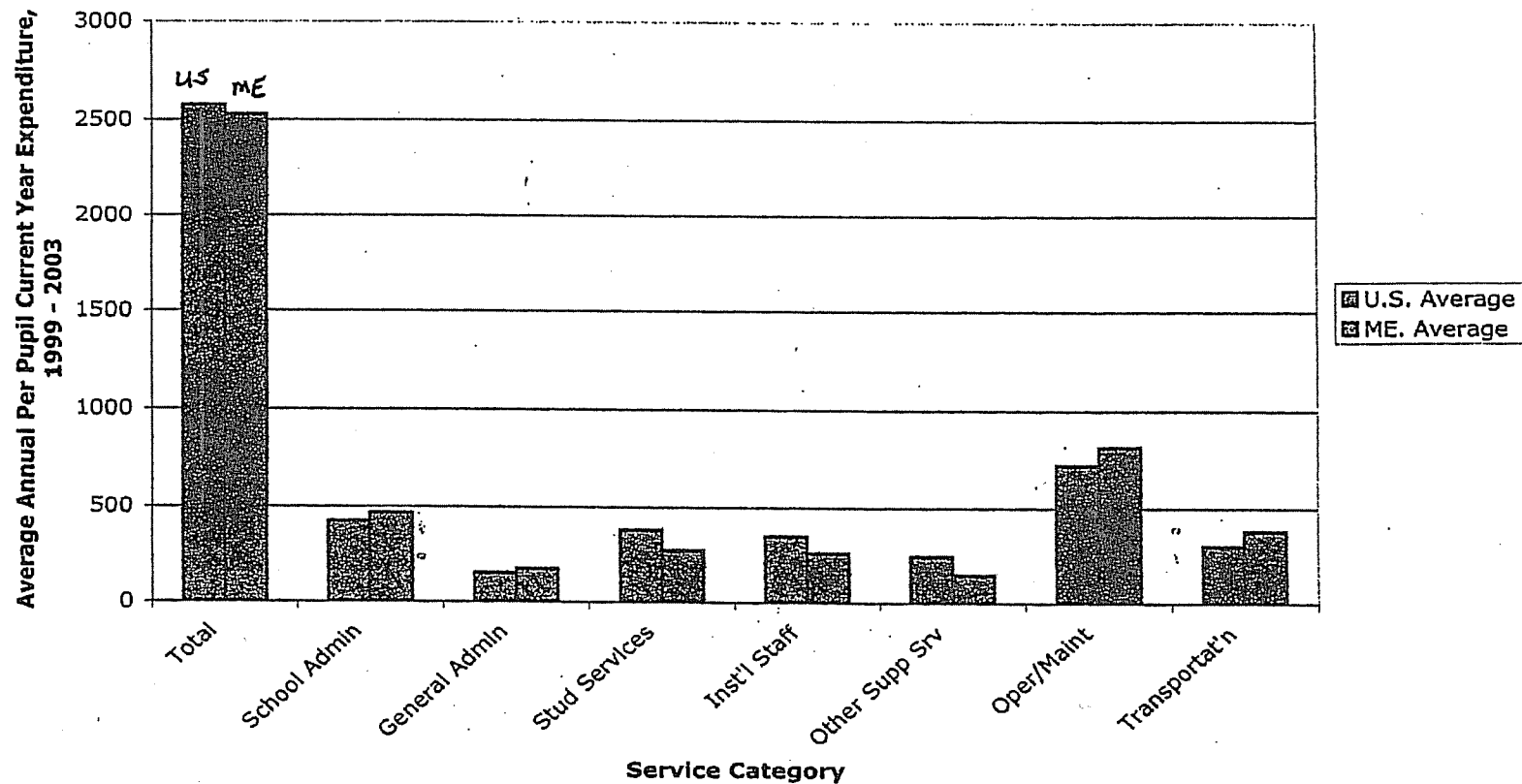


Chart 2. Average Annual Per Pupil Expenditures for Support Services in Maine and the U.S., 1999 - 2003



Student Support Services – staff providing attendance and social work, guidance, health, psychological services, speech pathology, audiology and other services

Instructional Staff – positions that are in the nature of teaching or in the improvement of the teaching-learning situation, including consultants or supervisors of instruction, guidance personnel, librarians, psychological personnel and other instructional staff

Other Support Services – business support services, central support services, and other support services not otherwise classified

School Administration – staff for the office of the principal, full-time department chairpersons, and graduation expenses

General Administration – staff for boards of education and executive administration

Source: NCES, USDOE

Rising Requirements and Expectations on Maine Schools
 Growing Demands on Teachers, Students, Parents – and Support Staff
 (starting with administrators)
 1960 - 2005

1960

1964 National Civil Rights Act (US)
 1965 Elementary/Secondary Ed. Act (US)

1970

1975 Special Education P.L. 94-142 (US)
 Vocational Education Legislation
 Gifted and Talented Services

1980

1983 *Nation at Risk*
 Effective Schools; Excellence Movementt

1984/88 School reform/restructuring bills (Chapters 125/127)
 Minimum Teacher Pay; Teacher
 Support Systems; Required School
 Improvement Plans; MEA's
 School Choice/Home Schooling

1990

1992/6 Maine's Common Core of Learning
 Maine Learning Results; alignment
 of curriculum; New funding formula

2000

2001 September 11; Columbine: New concerns for safety and health
 No Child Left Behind (US); systems of
 "sanctions and supports" (ME) w/o federal funding
 Infusion of Technology w/o sufficient state funding to support
 integration

2003 – 05 Local Assessment System requirements;
 School Reviews by MDOE (ME);
 Essential Programs & Services Funding (at "adequate" levels
 statewide)

Some useful sources:

Berry, Christopher (2006) School Consolidation and Inequality. Brookings Institution Conference Proceedings: What do we Know about the Effects of Schools Size and Class Size? (May, 2006)

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Howley, C. (1996). Compounding Disadvantage: The effects of School and District Size on Student Achievement in West Virginia. *Journal of Research in Rural Education* 12(1). 25-32.

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Johnson, J. D., Howley, C. and A. Howley (2002). Size, Excellence, and Equity. A Report on Arkansas Schools and Districts. Athens OH: Ohio University College of Education (ERIC Document ED 459 987)

Lawrence, B. et al (2002) Dollars and Sense: The Cost Effectiveness of Small Schools. Cincinnati OH: The KnowledgeWorks Foundation.
National Center for Educational Statistics, United States Office of Education (nces.ed.gov)

Trostel, P. and K. Reilly (2005). Improving Educational Resource Allocation in Maine. Orono ME: Margaret Chase Smith Policy Center, University of Maine.

Yan, Wenfan (2006) Is Bigger Better? A Comparison of Rural School Districts. Harrisburg PA: Center for Rural Pennsylvania.

What can be centralized and what must remain decentralized in an effective educational organization?

Gordon Donaldson, University of Maine
January, 2007

The chart below lists the major organizational functions of schools and school districts. It then evaluates, based on both my understanding of the research literature and my experience, to what extent each function can be centralized without compromising the quality of education delivered to children. This document is intended to assist discussions regarding centralization of school administration and consolidation of schools and districts.

The research literature is mixed on whether larger administrative districts are more efficient – produce higher quality learning at a lower price than smaller districts. Most research on school and district effectiveness finds that student learning and school improvement are most successful when teachers, principals, parents, and students have substantial responsibility and discretion in them. School reform in the past thirty years has focused on breaking down educational bureaucracies (most notably in Chicago and the entire English national system) and stimulating school-based initiative, choice, and leadership (see Fullan; Elmore; Darling-Hammond; Tyack and Cuban;Sizer; Spillane; Lieberman; Oakes; Bryk and Schneider; Evans; Barth; DuFour, Eaker, and DuFour).

The literature – and our own common sense – indicates that certain functions can be centralized without impairing student performance and parent involvement but that certain functions cannot. The leadership and management of high-performing schools and school districts need to blend two vital things: 1) vesting in teachers, principals, parents and students substantial responsibility and judgment over classroom and school decisions; 2) devising lean management systems to provide resources and support, within the means available, to these “front-line” educators and learners.

What functions, then, can and cannot be centralized if high quality is to be maintained and enhanced while costs remain manageable for the citizens of Maine?

<u>Function</u>	<u>Centralized? *</u>	<u>Why?/Why Not?</u>
Financials: accounting/purchasing	Largely	Requires efficient ordering, accounting and communication systems, bulk purchasing, staff specialization and technological efficiencies

		Must interface extremely well with classroom and school educators' decisions regarding what children need
Plant Management & Transportation	Substantially	With efficient staff management, planning, and communication systems, requiring intermediate level supervisors familiar with geography and roads (transportation), buildings (maintenance), and community needs
Specialized educational staff & services	Somewhat	Must establish the "case load" for high-quality delivery of specialized services: special educational services, diagnostic services, guidance services, co-curricular services, technology services, professional development services, curriculum/assessment services; adult education services "High-quality" is a function of responsiveness to needs and the application of accurate information and judgment relevant to those needs.
Fiscal and Educational Policy and Planning	Somewhat	Financial and programmatic needs vary from community to community and even school to school, based on the educational needs/readiness of student populations and their families. One-size-fits-all policies can work at a very general level (such as setting standards) but have been shown not to work for implementation procedures or when they curtail educator judgment and discretion.
Contract Negotiations	Somewhat	Depersonalized, professional negotiation prevents negative emotions from infecting working relationships among educators and between educators and community members. On the other hand, political clout grows as the numbers grow and as the stage becomes more public and heavily publicized.

Public Information and Political Responsiveness	Very little	Communities want information about their own schools and transparency builds local support and engagement. Most politics are local. Resistance to centralized authority is endemic. Centralized politics means more publicity, more and stronger interest groups, and policy by compromise rather than by informed and judicious decision.
Student Instruction and Management	No	Professional educator discretion is essential, as is responsiveness to issues as they arise and the necessity of involving parents and specialists, as needed. Planning functions and school-based leadership and problem-solving require faculty-wide involvement. Supervision of personnel is optimal with a "case load" per supervisor of 12-16.
School Climate and Culture; Leadership	No	School, faculty, and student body climate have great bearing on teacher and student performance (safety; expectations; support) and are unique to each school/community and require constant adjustment and sensitive leadership.
Community Participation and Support	No	Citizen engagement in community schools is essential to both public faith in schools and financial support for schools. It establishes the foundation for parent involvement in their child's education and to open communication between school staff and community.

- "Centralized" in the sense promoted by the Local Schools, Regional Services Initiative (26 districts ranging in geographic size considerably and in enrollment from 2000 to 20,000)

February 8, 2007

Members of the Education and Appropriation Committees,

First of all, I would like to say that the Governor's education administrative consolidation plan has my full support. The other plans appear to fall short of his goal.

On Monday, February 5, 2007, I listened to most of the testimony regarding the Governor's plan and the six other proposals. In the Monday evening news broadcast on television and in the Kennebec Journal newspaper on Tuesday, the headlines were "Statewide Opposition", "Mainers tell legislators that Baldacci plan is too extreme". From all the testimony I listened to, the majority of those testifying against were mostly school superintendents, principals, head masters, school board members, and teachers. Based on those who testified, I personally don't feel that the words "Statewide Opposition" and "Mainers" is an accurate description of what transpired at the public hearing.

I would like to remind you that in a recent study released in early February, 51% of Mainers were in favor of the Governor's plan, 34% were undecided, and only 15% were opposed.

It was stated at the hearing that 81% of schools or school districts exceeded their spending cap. This leads me to the topic of local control. I would like to use CSD 10 as an example. On May 25, 2006, the CSD 10 Annual Budget was voted in. A budget of over \$10.5 million was voted in by only 89 residents from Readfield, Manchester, Wayne and Mt. Vernon. This was an increase of 5.82% over the previous year's budget. Thirty-six residents from Readfield, 12 residents from Manchester, 17 residents from Wayne and 23 residents from Mt. Vernon came out for the CSD vote. The Kennebec Journal reported the following day that the budget was overwhelmingly approved. How can this be? This budget was approved by just over 1% of 7,461 residents.

This same scenario also applies to the Readfield Elementary School budget, which was voted on and approved at the June 15, 2006 Town Meeting with only 113 of 2,360 residents in attendance. Many of those attending this meeting were school administrators, school board members, and teachers who reside in the town. In my opinion, based on the above, there is no local control. The days of the town meeting form of government are gone. We need to vote at the polls, so everyone has an opportunity. Then, and only then, will we once again have local control.

Thank you,

BERNIE PLOURDE
Readfield, Maine

Dear Sir or Madam:

I am writing to voice my displeasure over the talks of consolidation of school districts and placing them under state control. I am also very disappointed that Gov. Baldacci did not make public these plans BEFORE his election.

At a recent Scarborough meeting we were told by legislators that consolidation will happen, just the type of plan would need to be decided. I don't think I missed any political science classes when I was in school, so I am fairly certain that the voting public's opinion matters, that super majority rules, and that we can all "Just Say No" to the Governor's concept.

In general, Maine is perceived as a high spending state with a fair education system. The only reason to consider change, in my opinion, would be to substantially lower costs while at the same time significantly improving education for all our students and attracting/retaining excellent educators. The state controlled consolidation concept does not appear to do either. Publications exist that show when other states tried this, expenses actually went UP (Eggers, William, Deloitte Services, LP, Driving More Money into the Classroom: The Promise of Shared Services, 2005.). I see no other result than more middle management hired and a less flexible, less innovative big inefficient machine happening. It is already forecast that student teacher ratios will go UP!

Historically, the state has not shown promise when implementing and administrating other large programs such as MaineCare. For instance; I as a physician, my staff and government employees need to go through a reapplication process for medicine authorizations every 6 months for the rest of the patient's life, even after it's approved initially!

I also see the State's claiming the town's school land and their buildings but leaving the debt behind to the towns as worse than just simple theft. Scarborough is a growing town that already has a large population of students who perform well despite spending the least per student in our proposed cluster. We also, like many other towns, benefit from local involvement with PTO, many volunteers, and fundraising which gives much to our schools at no expense to taxpayers. What a travesty to see people frustrated at the loss of local pride/involvement and control send their children to private schools. I believe the success of a society greatly lies in a public school system that includes children of all economic backgrounds.

The only semblance of consolidation that I may consider as viable is proposing that any two small school districts (say less than 1,000 children) that are geographically close, share a superintendent's office (however, without State involvement).

I will be watching closely all lawmakers involved in this process, and noting which way they vote. I feel so strongly about this issue that no matter what a lawmaker's voting history may be or other current platform opinions are that I might agree with, if they do not stand against State controlled and mandated consolidation, they WILL NOT have my vote in the future.

Sincerely,

Debra Fuchs-Ertman, M.D.

Strongly supported by:

Kimberly Shell, Scarborough

February 8, 2007

My name is Kimberly Shell. I have two children, ages 7 and 9, currently in the Scarborough School District.

Regarding the proposed school consolidation plans, specifically Region 24, I have the following thoughts/questions I'd like to submit for your consideration.

- 1) *Savings* - Being an accountant by trade, as well as a former administrator of a hospital in charge of budgeting, I question the real savings of this plan. While certain administrative cost line items may be trimmed from the budget, there will inevitably be additional costs associated with such large affiliations. One example - the technology costs of supporting cohesive infrastructure of such a large district. Transportation is another possible added cost - especially in a wide geographic region such as the proposed Region 24 (see below). How about offering incentives to schools that achieve cost savings in voluntary alliances? Sure - purchasing contracts with large vendors could save money. Streamlining curriculum would as well (after all, we all have to meet the same state standards). Across the board consolidation is not necessarily the only way to save money.
- 2) *Region/Size* - the number of students as well as the vast geographic area it covers is of concern to me. I believe the use of vocational centers as a basis for determining districts is not necessarily the best rationale. Scarborough shares more geographic, economic, and demographic similarities with communities such as Cape Elizabeth and South Portland than it does with Raymond, Linington and Hollis, for example. If these "Regions" are truly going to work - I believe the geographic issues warrants consideration. If national average school district size is 3-4,000 students, and Scarborough is in that range by itself, why would it be forced into a seemingly unmanageable 16,000 students? It was noted at the meeting tonight, that the economies of scale peak at approximately 4,000 students. This may be one reason why Scarborough is purported to be "leaner" than the other systems in the proposed Region 24. We're at the right number. Four times the right number does not make sense.
- 3) *Facilities* - I have heard that under the LSRB plan, the region would take control of all facilities and properties, yet the individual towns retain the debt for those facilities. I'm sure you know where I'm heading on this one. Scarborough continues with active dialogue on how to maintain and improve our facilities. We are not yet where we want to be in terms of facilities and LSRB will put us even further behind.
- 4) *Education* - Finally! That is where the education piece seems to have fallen in all of this - the very end. This LSRB plan began as a line item in the Governors budget... not a discussion about how best to educate our children. Scarborough has a unique system of three small primary schools. I've always thought of that as a great way to get kids off on the right foot - familiar people, small size. I can't help but think that Region 24's proposed size would impact our children in countless ways... larger classes, as well as the larger district. This would impact them in kindergarten and all the way through high school. Children should not be "numbers" - not even in college - but most certainly, not in 4th grade. "Leave No Child Behind" is a great idea... just don't hold everyone back either. I believe there is a greater risk of that in such a large district. I'm also not sure why we'd be

giving breaks in tuition for college students - many of whom can have an active hand in supporting their own education - at the expense of a primary level student.

- 5) *Community - Scarborough has and continues to work hard to have a school district that our community can be proud of. It's never easy to decide where to spend tax dollars and on what. If we want something bad enough - we figure out a way to pay for it. Scarborough is an amazing community of "can-do" people - I would hate to lose that to a homogenized region in which little is accomplished.*

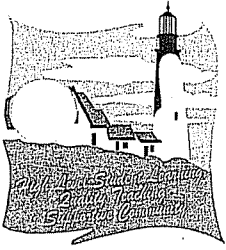
In summary, I do believe the issues of consolidation makes sense along some lines such a purchasing contracts and curriculum, but the Region 24 district as proposed just makes no sense.

Strive for excellence... spend your money wisely... and then have all you've worked for taken away... is that really "the way life should be"?

Thank you for your time. Please forward these comments as you see fit.

Sincerely,

Kimberly Shell
28 Gunstock Road
Scarborough, ME 04074
207-883-4271



CAPE ELIZABETH SCHOOLS

Alan H. Hawkins
Superintendent of Schools

Dominic DePatsy
Special Services

Sarah Simmonds/Shari Robinson
Curriculum and Staff Development

Pauline Aportria
Business Manager

February 5, 2007

Dear Governor Baldacci, Commissioner Gendron, and Honorable Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs and of the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations,

As members of The Cape Elizabeth School Board, we would like to take this opportunity to convey our thoughts and opinions regarding the proposed changes to our education system including those made under the proposed Local Schools, Regional Support Initiative (LSRS), The Responsible Government Spending and Investment Act, The Board of Education's plan and Senator Turner's act.

We hope that you will give this process the time necessary to reach a sound policy. The attempt to rush the passage of such a far reaching change in the way education is provided in our communities is unnecessary and possibly detrimental to education in Maine. This process should include a solid analysis with specific data on any plan's impact at the state, local and student level and the involvement of a much broader spectrum of stakeholders.

We oppose the proposed consolidation plans before the legislature for reasons provided below, but we support the notion that there are areas for improvement in the effective delivery of education in Maine and that there is a need for tax relief. As such, we recommend the following:

- The process of developing and implementing a new approach to education in Maine should include a strong representation of all stakeholders including superintendents, teachers, school board members, citizens, state legislatures, and business leaders. This should be a "bottom – up" process and not "top – down".
- Any new approach implemented for the delivery of education in Maine should maintain local control.
- The state needs to support and fund alliances and cooperatives to allow the sharing of best practices and models between communities.
- Incentives should be created and financially supported to encourage cost-savings measures whether through consolidation or sharing of services (Essential Service Districts for example).
- Any new measures should support educational leadership provided by superintendents which is proven to be critical to high performing schools.

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- Incentives also should be introduced to encourage municipal efficiencies. Efforts such as Cape Elizabeth's "one town concept" should be rewarded and supported. By "one town concept" we mean the sharing of many administrative positions between school and municipal operations. In Cape Elizabeth we share our business manager, technology director, and payroll, accounts payable and technology support staff. The town assists with building and field maintenance, and our community services director schedules our school and town buildings and manages our school transportation needs.
- The effectiveness and efficiency of county government needs to be reviewed and changes should be made to reduce the high cost of our penal system.
- New revenue raising initiatives must be implemented such as increasing tourism fees and taxes at a level equal to at least the New England average.
- Maine must move forward with real economic development programs to create a sustainable economy and standard of living in Maine.

We oppose all or part of the proposed consolidated legislation for the following reasons:

- Creating super sized districts and increasing teacher/student ratios does not advance education. The LSRS supporters' tenet that it is desirable to homogenize the delivery of education is questionable. It is our belief, rather, that allowing these changes will destroy the close community/school ties which fuels creative responses to challenges and opportunities and erodes the district's ability to be innovative in helping all children achieve. Any proposed changes must provide detailed explanations as to how they will result in the continuous improvement of student learning.
- We do not support mandating consolidation. No initiative should penalize those districts that currently provide an excellent education effectively and efficiently. As an example, Cape Elizabeth has a long history of outstanding educational performance. In 2005-2006, we spent on average \$1,500 less per student than eight of the other districts we would join in the Portland Regional District. It is a real possibility that our town citizens ironically will pay more taxes for education while losing local control.
- We are unconvinced that a small district's educational leadership will truly have the opportunity to rise up and hold sway in a larger regional district. How can a smaller high performing district maintain its formula for success when it would have a minority vote on the regional board of directors (1 out of 15) and a minority vote on the budget referendum (7,000 votes out of 104,000)?
- We object to the inequity of funding a regional district education budget based on property value and basing representation on population.
- Larger districts will require more mid-level administrators than currently exist, and as such the assumed cost savings of consolidation will be significantly reduced.

- Under the LSRS proposal, we would lose town assets that are not school related, as our town library, police department and fire station all reside on school property.
- Under our one town concept, the municipal pool and fitness center which are located in the high school and classrooms campus-wide are available for citizen use through community services. We have no assurances that this will continue when the school property is transferred to the Regional District.

There are many questions that flow from the LSRS and other proposed legislation, but because we do not support the underlying precepts of mandated consolidation and homogenization of educational programming, we ask that you step back and re-evaluate the best way to provide cost savings and tax relief. We appreciate your hard work in leading our state and hope that you will consider our position as you move ahead.

Respectfully,

The Cape Elizabeth School Board

Patricia Brigham *Patricia Brigham*
 Karen Burke *Karen Burke*
 Peter Cotter *Peter Cotter*
 Rebecca Millett *Rebecca Millett*

Kathy Ray *Kathy Ray*
 Kevin Sweeney *Kevin Sweeney*
 Linda Winker *Linda Winker*

Senator Margaret Rotundo

School Union #60

PO Box 100

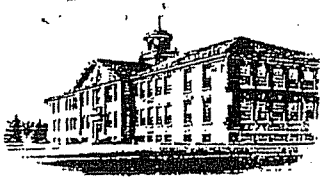
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Shawna M. Morrill, Adm. Secretary
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Darralyn Gauvin, Accts. Payable Clerk

Greenville
Shirley
Beaver Cove
Willimantic
Kingsbury Plantation

February 7, 2007

To: Respected Senators and Representatives
From: Heather Perry, Superintendent of Schools, Union 60
Re: Positive suggestions regarding gaining efficiencies in education
Cc: Union 60 School Board Members and Local Representatives

Dear Senators and Representatives,

First of all, let me thank you for being given the opportunity to send people from Greenville to the Public Hearings on Monday, February 5th, 2007 to testify on behalf of our small community and its treasured school. I am sure that by this point in the legislative process, you have heard from a myriad of individuals regarding their thoughts on regionalization, the governor's proposal, and the other proposals that are out there right now. I am also sure that you have had the opportunity to hear from many different people representing many different towns in Maine. Finally, I am sure that you have heard enough about the governor's proposal to make you question the accurateness of its cost savings projections, and its viability for rural areas in Maine such as ours. Knowing all of this, it is now your task to come up with a plan to save money for the taxpayers. As a lifelong public servant, I understand personally what a daunting task this is.

In an effort to assist you in these tough decisions, I felt it would be important at this juncture to write to you with some suggestions around what types of cost saving measures might work best for Greenville and by comparison, many other isolated small schools across the state. In the way the governor rolled out his proposal, he effectively took away the voice of some of the most knowledgeable people across the state regarding this issue: School Superintendents. I want to say up front that I am NOT interested in fighting for my job. I AM, however, interested in fighting for what is best for the children of Greenville and their small community. If what is best takes me out of the picture. . . so be it! I hope you realize the sincerity of this comment as I work through this letter and try to lay out for you some suggestions about how to approach this difficult issue. Enough of an introduction, lets get down to the suggestions! ☺

In the myriad of meetings that I have attended over the past few weeks, some common themes around both the process and the outcomes for proposed change have surfaced. I would like to use the common threads from these conversations as the basis for my suggestions. The first revolve around the process of change and how it is best accomplished in small rural schools and the communities within which they exist:

- **Allow the decisions to flow from the ground up.** In small, rural schools, it is the people at the local level that know the most about how their schools function, where the cost efficiencies are, and where they are not. It is also the local people who know where more savings can be found outside of education to help schools run more efficiently. Maine has a history of producing great problem solvers, and people who know about ingenuity and creativeness. Allow the character of our local citizens to show through and give them the opportunity to sit down with one another and find solutions that best meet their unique needs.
- **Understand that one size does not fit all.** Greenville is truly an isolated school. It may not be on an island, but it is isolated. Because of this, it experiences special circumstances that will not allow it to fit the EPS funding model. The organization of governance structures AND educational funding from the state should be based upon geography and commonalities within areas that have like minded communities, and always with alternate options for districts that are geographically isolated.
- **Allow for a method in which final approval of any regionalization or consolidation plan requires approval of the local voter.**
- **Offer some financial assistance to "get the ball rolling".** Having good conversations requires that there be meetings, with people to facilitate, research, pilots, etc. These things, if done correctly, require some funding. If you want people to seriously look into significant changes, show them just how serious you are by offering some incentives.

The second set of suggestions revolves around the actual objectives of any decisions to regionalize or consolidate services for schools in rural Maine. Objectives should be focused around:

- **Improvement of student achievement and program offerings.**
- **Optimizing decisions for the most effective property tax relief possible without going against #1. ☺**
- **Limitations of bus rides.** There should be some definitions or direction provided as to what maximum bus rides should be, and then great care needs to be taken to ensure that these objectives are met.
- **A REAL cost savings MUST BE SHOWN.** No speculation. . . those making decisions around regionalization or consolidation need to have ACCURATE data to work with, and must show actual cost savings before being allowed to proceed. Piloting projects BEFORE final approval by local voters should be strongly encouraged.
- **Regionalization or consolidation efforts should be focused FIRST on non-classroom based administrative services and sharing of programs to save dollars in an effort to ensure students are not being negatively impacted.**
- **Ensuring that there are as few economic impacts to small rural communities as possible.** In most rural towns, the schools are truly the heart of the town. This is not just emotionally, but economically as well. Great care should be taken not to upset this delicate balance.
- **Bringing in other groups or organizations to help schools run more efficiently.** In small rural towns, municipal organizations should be brought into the conversation early and often, as well as area business leaders. In small towns, the municipal government, the school government, and business people should all be on the same team. We can all help one another in a variety of ways.

After thinking about these suggestions, the next obvious question to ask would be: How can state government help or assist our small rural communities in making these decisions? I have suggestions here as well. . . those are:

- **Provide small amounts of funding to support collaboration among like-minded communities.**

- **Provide informational resources from the DOE in a timely manner.** Currently, superintendents don't even see their full 281's (their EPS funding numbers) until so late in the spring that we barely have time to plug our numbers into our budgets and get them passed. Information must be accurate and it must be timely. The DOE currently has 2 people that compile funding numbers for our schools across the state. This is not enough, and the computer system that is being used is old, outdated, and not even connected to the MEDMS system.
- **Insist that the DOE provide a vision for its schools and stick with it.** Over the past 8 years, the DOE has flipped back and forth from one initiative to the other. Millions of dollars have been poured into an LAS development that has just recently been scrapped. This is just one example of many. We as educators implore you as legislators to force the DOE to slow down, find something that needs to be done, and focus on it until it is accomplished. No more wasting time and energy on mandates from the DOE (which sometimes get them from you the legislators, or from the Feds) that get drastically changed just 2 years down the road. Currently, we don't even have time to gather accurate data on whether or not one initiative is working before another one is mandated! A VISION MUST BE REQUIRED.
- **Provide a realistic timeline as well as a list of expectations/goals to be accomplished.** In other words, tell us what you are seeking, provide time and resources for us to find answers and then let us answer! ☺

Once again, I thank you for your time and efforts on this issue. The issues that you are currently dealing with are far reaching ones that get at the very heart of some major problems in Maine: Health care and insurance coverage, Government Efficiencies, Human Resource Development, and Property Tax Relief are just a few. I would love to become a resource for you as you move forward with your planning and proposals. PLEASE FEEL FREE TO CONTACT ME with any questions using the information provided above. My only goals in the job that I perform daily, revolve around improving the education for the children of Greenville, anything that does not negatively impact that is on the table as far as I am concerned. I know that many others in this community share this sentiment.

Thank you,



Heather J. Perry,
Superintendent of Schools

P.S.

Below I have attached a copy of a paper that was put together by the Maine Small Schools Coalition. I think you might find it very helpful as you move forward. I have also included a copy of a piece by the Rural School and Community Trust around standards for Reorganization of Small Rural Schools. I hope you find the information useful. Thank you.

Making All Maine Schools
More Effective and More Cost-Efficient

A Proposal to Governor Baldacci and the Maine Education Community
From the Maine Small Schools Coalition
January 2007 www.sad12.com/coalition

The Challenge: To enhance the high quality of Maine's public education system while easing the burden on local and state taxes.

The Maine Small Schools Coalition invites the Governor, the Legislature, and the education community to consider the proposals in this document in our efforts to meet this challenge. The MSSC believes that schools serve as essential community assets as well as learning centers for our children. The challenge of strengthening quality while containing costs requires that we keep foremost the core benefits that our public education system brings to our communities and state.

Nine Priorities to Strengthen Community Schools for Maine presents the Coalition's cornerstones for high-quality schooling for Maine. (See p. 6)

Four Major Strategies

The Maine Small Schools Coalition proposes four major strategies to meet this challenge. The four strategies are detailed in Action Proposals on pages 2 - 3 and in Immediate Initiatives for 2007 on pages 4 -5.

Strategy 1 Collaborative Leadership: Pursue collaborative management and leadership arrangements among schools that enrich the learning options for all children and affect fiscal efficiencies.

Strategy 2 Build Assets: Optimize the existing strengths that make our schools successful learning environments for all children: committed and creative educators; energetic and involved parents; and engaged community members.

Strategy 3 21st Century Methods: Bring learning to children rather than busing children to 20th Century schools by investing in learning technologies that make geographic distances irrelevant and in professional development to enable educators and parents to use these technologies well with children.

Strategy 4 Equitable Funding: Develop a means of funding public PreK-12 education that is equitable for a) all Maine communities and b) all Maine citizens.

Specific Action Proposals for Each Strategy

Strategy 1: Collaborative leadership and management to improve educational quality and affect economies

- a. *Honor and support local citizens and communities making their own decisions regarding collaboration and cooperation by providing accurate and ample information to inform those decisions.*
- b. *Support further regional cooperation to share teachers/teaching assets, to share specialized staff and services in areas such as Special Education, curriculum coordination, professional development, alternative education programs, and after-school activities.*
- c. *Support further regional cooperation in the management of finances, transportation, purchases, maintenance, health, co-curricular activities and other such systems.*

- a. *Establish criteria to guide state and local decisions regarding the quality and extent of school administration to guarantee:*
 - i. *sensible supervision (support and accountability) for all employees and all school units and*
 - ii. *sound leadership that optimizes student learning in every school and district and*
 - iii. *responsiveness to parents and communities so that parental involvement and citizen engagement are optimized.*
- e. *Establish criteria to determine the optimum length of bus rides, the earliest pick-up and latest drop-off times for students, and other variables that impact the quality of the learning day*
- f. *Explore efficiencies through cooperation of education, municipal, and county management systems*

Strategy 2 Building On Existing Assets

- a. *Bring equity to the pay and professional support of all teachers, statewide; highly committed, broadly educated, and well-supported teachers are essential to the learning of every Maine child.*
- b. *Make schools accessible and approachable to every parent; keep distances – real and imagined – between home and school as small as possible so parents and teachers can succeed as real partners in the learning of children.*
- c. *Develop additional ways to make schools 24-7 community resources: places where citizens of all ages can gather to learn, to pursue cultural and social interests, to conduct community business, and to link to knowledge bases around the globe.*
- d. *Develop ways that schools and school leaders become partners with community and regional efforts to diversify and strengthen local economies.*

Strategy 3 Twenty-First Century Learning Technologies for all Learners to make schools hubs for learning and communication 24-7.

- a. *Install reliable ATM/Polycom/Internet systems in all schools.*
- b. *Provide statewide and regional coordination of courses, learning activities, and professional development for teachers and parents so the system will be used; provide incentives for teachers to offer learning opportunities by distance technologies.*
- c. *Provide local access for economic development and community development; make schools the hub of communication and learning for every community in Maine.*
- d. *Collaborate with Community College and University systems to give community members access to higher education opportunities.*

Strategy 4 Equitable Funding

Undertake immediately a review of Maine's education funding formula and policies to ensure Maine's guarantee to each Maine child of an "equal opportunity to learn". In particular:

- a. Develop a fair way to factor "ability to pay" (personal income) into each Maine taxpayer's education tax burden so that "property rich, cash poor" citizens are not forced to sell or move (see, for example, the Vermont plan).
- b. Develop a fair way to factor each community's home and family educational resources into the determination of funding needs and requirements because some populations require more educational services than others.
- c. Factor into Maine's measure of financial equity each community's actual locally raised "over-ride funds" (in addition to the state mandated millage) and provide for those communities that are less able to raise such funds.

Immediate Initiatives for 2007

The Maine Small School Coalition proposes the following six initiatives as initial steps to engage in the Action Proposals above. The MSSC invites others to join member districts in developing these initiatives into viable efforts to improve learning while containing costs.

Initiative 1: Share the services of specialized teachers.

Efforts should focus on Foreign Language, Physics, chemistry, math, advanced placement, gifted and talented, and special education instruction. (Strategies 2 and 3)

Initiative 2: Fund on a pilot basis regional distance-education cooperatives.

These should support the delivery of learning and professional development for teachers and parents to make use of distance-learning technologies for their students and children. Address constraints such as contractual issues between districts and scheduling conflicts. Offer incentives for teachers to become involved and ensure technical expertise to make the technology function reliably. Consider forming a "statewide distance learning faculty" with expertise in delivery. (Strategies 2 and 3)

Initiative 3. Make pay equitable statewide for teachers.

Reform Essential Programs and Services rules to put all Maine teachers on a uniform state pay scale. Eliminate regional salary factors. (Strategies 1 and 4)

Initiative 4. Provide pilot grants and assistance to make schools as community hubs for planning, development and education.

Build from existing initiatives such as Campaign Readiness in Jackman and the support of the Kay Rand Corp that bring together schools, business, and community leaders to assess needs and develop ways schools and districts can support community growth and learning. Encourage statewide services to "plug in" to communities technologically (e.g., SCORE, health programs, social programs, programs for elders such as Senior College, programs for pre-school parents). (Strategies 1 and 3)

Initiative 5. Establish parameters to guide decisions regarding administration and the geographic consolidation of schools.

Undertake reviews supported by valid and reliable data to ascertain the costs and benefits of existing administrative and district structures. Develop models that will help local, regional, and state decision-makers to make sensible, long-term judgments concerning leadership and consolidation that will not compromise the quality of learning for all students. (see Strategies 1d and 1e)

Initiative 6. Generate alternative models for education funding that balance

EPS's emphasis on "minimal adequacy of services" with assurances of equity for all Maine communities.

The number of "adjustments" to EPS demonstrates that its underlying formulas do not sufficiently address the widely varying conditions in Maine's communities, schools, and regions. These adjustments have made it impossible to know if the worthy goal of EPS – ensuring equity of funding to support equal opportunities to learn for every Maine child – has been realized. Because educational need is a function of family background and wealth, these efforts must pursue vigorously the inclusion of personal income and other revenue sources in the education funding system. (see Strategy 4)

Contact Person: Dick Gould, Executive Director, MSSC, mesmallhs@midmaine.com

**Maine Small Schools Coalition
Nine Priorities to Strengthen Community Schools for Maine
(See March, 2006 Full Version for Details)**

The Maine Small Schools Coalition calls on state government, town officials, the business community, the education community, and Mainers in every community to:

- 1. Ensure a level playing field to every child and to every community as it seeks to strengthen its school and community through equitable distribution of resources.*
- 2. Attract and support the most highly educated, well-trained teachers in the country.*
- 3. Reaffirm that education is for life, not just for test scores. Give value to learning civic responsibility, teamwork, self-discipline, and community-mindedness.*
- 4. Actively engage parents and communities in the education of their children and the next generation. Children succeed as learners when family and community reinforce the school's core mission.*
- 5. Invest each community with the responsibility and authority to decide if it wants schools within its borders.*
- 6. Generate immediately a school funding system that allows schools to thrive in every community in Maine, regardless of size, wealth and location.*
- 7. Make every school a resource for educational, social, and cultural activities in the community, serving more people of all ages with 21st century technologies.*
- 8. Recognize and build on the power of community schools as engines of local and regional economic development.*
- 9. Engage many voices and interests in shaping schools to serve the goals that communities and the state value. Make education policy-making and planning information widely known, participatory, and transparent,*

"This document is offered as an excellent set of standards by which to rationally discuss and evaluate any contemplated reorganization or consolidation of rural schools or school districts. Local citizens may decide through consensus to add to or revise these standards for a better fit for their own local situation."

Rural School District Reorganization Standards *

State plans to reorganize rural schools or school districts should result in an organizational structure that is accountable to the following standards:

1. Maintains and improves small schools, making them more cost-effective.
2. Provides funding for each school sufficient to meet program and outcome standards as defined by the state and to provide each child with an equal opportunity to achieve.
3. Retains or places schools within communities and avoids placing them in isolated open country.
4. Provides maximum participation in school governance by communities served by the school and the school district and requires community approval of school closings.
5. Honors and reinforces a policy of racial desegregation.
6. Makes best use of appropriate distance learning technologies to share students and faculty enriching curriculum and instruction without enlarging schools or transporting students.
7. Reduces disparity between districts in local tax capacity and effort.
8. Protects children from bus rides exceeding 30 minutes each way for elementary students and one hour each way for high school students.
9. Maximizes regional cooperation between districts, such as regional education service centers, to provide high-cost, low-demand services efficiently to schools and/or students who require them.
10. Strengthens local economic and community development and supports and is supported by community patterns of work and commerce.

The foregoing list is not prioritized. Where circumstances produce a conflict between the standards, state policy should seek to resolve the conflict and to achieve optimum compliance with all conflicting standards.

"* Offered with permission of and with thanks to the Rural School & Community Trust, Marty Strange, Policy Director, who developed this list of standards.

Maine Educational Secretaries Association

February 8, 2007

The Honorable Margaret Rotundo:

We, the officers of the Maine Educational Secretaries Association, feel compelled to write to you concerning the Governor's proposal to consolidate school districts.

Our organization will be celebrating our 70th anniversary next October. We represent all secretaries and administrative assistants who work in education in the state, including, but not limited to school secretaries, curriculum secretaries, special education secretaries, guidance secretaries, adult education secretaries, and central office secretaries.

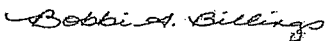
The governor's proposal to consolidate administrative offices took us by surprise. We were especially disturbed by comments seeming to indicate that the work we do is redundant, duplicated, and unnecessary. Secretaries and administrative assistants have had their workload increase dramatically over the last five years. Every state initiative means more reports, more paperwork, and more time. Staffing has generally not increased, especially in the smaller districts. People simply add to their workloads. Some examples of increased work include: MEDMS, drug and alcohol testing, highly qualified teachers, websites, fingerprinting requirements, certification of staff, No Child Left Behind requirements, pesticide notifications to parents, etc. Our members have picked up these responsibilities without any extra compensation. We work hard, and we deserve to be recognized, not ignored, as this proposal works its way through the legislature.

We are also disturbed by reports that there will be no severance packages for affected staff. If we worked in a mill and were laid off, we would receive such packages. We understand that superintendents will have their contracts rolled over, and will receive no loss in pay. We do not understand how layoffs of 600 plus secretaries who earn considerably less money can be done so unfairly. Many of our secretaries have worked for over 20 years in school systems. They do not belong to Maine State Retirement. Saying they can be retrained as nurses, or plumbers is not really practical. This group of people will be spread out all over the state, not just in one town.

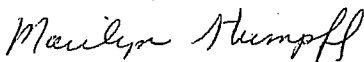
We have been told that some secretaries will be rehired to work in the new regions. We have concerns about retaining benefits earned through years of service. Seniority, health benefits, vacation time, sick days accumulated – all of these items must be addressed, and addressed uniformly. Again, it is not fair to say, "the region will take care of it", when some regions will have much greater resources at their disposal. We are concerned with equity for all of those affected.

We urge you to look at all the proposals on the table. It is clear that some consolidations must take place, and there are many ways efficiencies can be found. But do not balance the budget on the backs of hard-working secretaries and administrative assistants who are only doing their jobs, and doing them well.

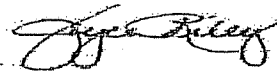
Thank you.



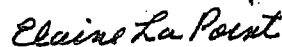
Bobbi Billings, President



Marilyn Stumpff, Treasurer



Joyce Riley, Vice-President



Elaine LaPoint, Secretary

Projected Cost Savings from Consolidation of Maine School Administrative Units

**Information Prepared for
Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations & Financial Affairs
Maine State Legislature**

**Dr. David L. Silvernail, Director
Center for Education Policy, Applied Research & Evaluation
University of Southern Maine**

March 2007

Goals of SAU Consolidation Initiatives:

- Decrease the costs of K-12 education by improving the efficiency in the system.
- Increase the amount of resources devoted to classroom instruction, and improve the use of these resources.
- Provide real, measurable tax relief for local taxpayers.

Question: What are the potential savings from the consolidation of Maine School Administrative Units?

A Study of the Relationship Between Maine School Administrative Unit Size, Costs, & Outcomes

2002-03 K-12 Per-Pupil Expenditure by Size Group

Size Range	Total Districts	Total Pupils	Per-Pupil Expenditure*	Difference from 2,500 +	Difference Times Pupils
2,500 +	24	80,243	\$6,635	-	-
1,000 - 2,500	42	66,212	\$6,854	\$219	\$14,500,428
500 - 1,000	22	17,296	\$7,309	\$674	\$11,657,504
125 - 500	20	6,744	\$8,271	\$1,636	\$11,033,184
1 - 125	2	159	\$12,105	\$11,470	\$1,823,730

*assuming state average in other variables

Maine Education Policy Research Institute
University of Southern Maine Office
D. Silvernail & J. Sloan
March 2004

2005-06 Per Pupil Resident Operating Expenditures by Category

Total Expenditures

	Fiscal Year Average Pupils: Total	Total Expenditures	Number of SAUs
State Totals	200,008	\$8,230	288
Units 500 or Less pupils	25,675	\$8,990	180
Units from 501 to 2000 pupils	73,816	\$8,269	74
Units from 2001 to 2500 pupils	29,038	\$8,143	13
Units from 2501 to 3000 pupils	21,806	\$7,632	8
Units from 3001 to 4000 pupils	33,763	\$7,950	10
Units from 4001 to 5000 pupils	8,668	\$7,903	2
Units Greater than 5000 pupils	7,243	\$8,972	1

2005-06 Per Pupil Resident Operating Expenditures by Category

System Administration Expenditures

	Fiscal Year Average Pupils: Total	System Administration	Number of SAUs
State Totals	200,008	\$565	288
Units 500 or Less pupils	25,675	\$687	180
Units from 501 to 2000 pupils	73,816	\$388	74
Units from 2001 to 2500 pupils	29,038	\$378	13
Units from 2501 to 3000 pupils	21,806	\$257	8
Units from 3001 to 4000 pupils	33,763	\$271	10
Units from 4001 to 5000 pupils	8,668	\$339	2
Units Greater than 5000 pupils	7,243	\$569	1

2005-06 Per Pupil Resident Operating Expenditures by Category

Facilities & Maintenance Expenditures

	Fiscal Year Average Pupils: Total	Facilities & Maintenance	Number of SAUs
State Totals	200,008	\$1,150	288
Units 500 or Less pupils	25,675	\$1,170	180
Units from 501 to 2000 pupils	73,816	\$1,140	74
Units from 2001 to 2500 pupils	29,038	\$1,197	13
Units from 2501 to 3000 pupils	21,806	\$991	8
Units from 3001 to 4000 pupils	33,763	\$1,070	10
Units from 4001 to 5000 pupils	8,668	\$1,077	2
Units Greater than 5000 pupils	7,243	\$1,228	1

2005-06 Per Pupil Resident Operating Expenditures by Category

Transportation Expenditures

	Fiscal Year Average Pupils: Total	Transportation	Number of SAUs
State Totals	200,008	\$790	288
Units 500 or Less pupils	25,675	\$964	180
Units from 501 to 2000 pupils	73,816	\$513	74
Units from 2001 to 2500 pupils	29,038	\$562	13
Units from 2501 to 3000 pupils	21,806	\$452	8
Units from 3001 to 4000 pupils	33,763	\$474	10
Units from 4001 to 5000 pupils	8,668	\$457	2
Units Greater than 5000 pupils	7,243	\$241	1

2005-06 Per Pupil Resident Operating Expenditures by Category

Special Education Expenditures

	Fiscal Year Average Pupils: Total	Special Education	Number of SAUs
State Totals	200,008	\$1,222	288
Units 500 or Less pupils	25,675	\$1,181	180
Units from 501 to 2000 pupils	73,816	\$1,287	74
Units from 2001 to 2500 pupils	29,038	\$1,178	13
Units from 2501 to 3000 pupils	21,806	\$1,176	8
Units from 3001 to 4000 pupils	33,763	\$1,373	10
Units from 4001 to 5000 pupils	8,668	\$1,574	2
Units Greater than 5000 pupils	7,243	\$1,157	1

Projected Savings with Minimum Size SAUs

Financial Category		SAU Size		
		>1,200 Pupils (<69,012)	>1,500 Pupils (<86,682)	>2,500 Pupils (<128,529)
Special Education		\$1,582,869	\$7,291,869	\$20,701,656
Transportation		\$11,520,062	\$10,340,202	\$29,799,387
Facilities Maintenance		\$4,580,467	\$2,879,589	\$39,209,700
System Administration		\$9,230,413	\$10,225,935	\$24,221,744
Total*	(1 Year)	\$26,913,811	\$30,737,595	\$113,932,487
	(3 Years)	\$80,741,433	\$92,212,785	\$341,797,461

* Not adjusted for inflation

2005-06 Per Pupil Resident Operating Expenditures by Category

Non-Instructional Expenditures

	Fiscal Year Average Pupils: Total	Non- Instructional Expenditures	Number of SAUs
State Totals	200,008	\$2,893	288
Units 500 or Less pupils	25,675	\$2,977	180
Units from 501 to 2000 pupils	73,816	\$2,831	74
Units from 2001 to 2500 pupils	29,038	\$2,849	13
Units from 2501 to 3000 pupils	21,806	\$2,357	8
Units from 3001 to 4000 pupils	33,763	\$2,456	10
Units from 4001 to 5000 pupils	8,668	\$2,660	2
Units Greater than 5000 pupils	7,243	\$2,867	1

Summary Observations:

Both **necessary** and **sufficient** conditions must be put in place to achieve the three goals of:

- Decrease the costs of K – 12 education by improving the efficiency in the system.
- Increase the amount of resources devoted to classroom instruction, and improve the use of these resources.
- Provide real, measurable tax relief for local taxpayers.

School Union Consolidation Governance Plan Draft Concept

This plan has two Board Structures that would govern the merger of two school Unions or a combination of School Unions and Municipal School Districts. This type of school unit configuration will be referred to as a "Super Union".

The Super Union will be governed by a Super Union Committee and by individual Municipal School Committees. Each of the two structures will have separate and distinct functions.

The Super Union Committee will be comprised of the Board Chairs or other designated Board members from each of the individual Municipal School Committees. The functions of the Super Union Committee will be the following:

- To cooperatively employ a Superintendent and necessary support staff.
- To develop and recommend common policies for all schools in the Super Union.
- To develop and approve a budget that supports all centralized services common to the entire Super Union. The services may include but are not limited to:

- *Financial Management (Payroll, Accounts Payable, etc.)
- *Human Resources Management
- *Joint Purchasing
- *Contract Bargaining
- *Recruitment of School Employees
- *Plant and Facilities Management
- *Technology Management
- *Federal Grant Management
- *Curriculum Coordination
- *Professional Development Planning and Coordination
- *ATM & Internet Course Coordination
- *Itinerant Teacher Plan
- *Special Education Management
- *Special Education Specialists
- *Gifted and Talented Program Management
- *Budget Preparation for all municipalities in the Super Union

The Superintendent will be evaluated by the Super Union Committee. The Superintendent shall meet with the Super Union Board on a monthly basis. The Superintendent will meet with the local Boards to present budgets, nominate teachers and principals and advise on legal matters. The Building Principal in each school will meet and report to the Local School Committee on a regular basis.

The Local School Committees would be responsible for the following:

- Adopt recommended Policies from Super Union Committee
- Review and adopt textbooks and courses of study recommended by the Super Union Committee
- Prepare and adopt an annual school budget (this will give each local School Board control of their local budget for their schools)
- School Facility planning
- Communication with public
- Quasi-Judicial Role. The Committee is responsible for holding hearings on matters such as employee dismissals or student expulsions

Local School Committees that have no school in their municipality shall meet with the Superintendent or his/her designee to conduct the following business:

- Develop and approve local school budget
- Hear potential or existing community concerns
- Hear reports on student performance

The majority of local School Committee meetings will be with the local Building Principal and members of the public. The local Building Principal will be responsible for the following:

- Inform Committee members of all school functions
- Inform Committee members of the status of school initiatives
- Inform Committee member of Curriculum Development progress
- Inform Committee of measures of student achievement
- Inform Committee members of Department of Education Initiatives
- Scheduling student and Teacher presentations for the Committee members
- Report on condition of Physical Plant
- Report of possible Grant opportunities
- Recommend staffing assignments
- Present school calendar for Committee approval
- Inform Committee of all Professional Development activities
- Distribute monthly written report from the Superintendent

**Proposed Exception
for
"EFFICIENT, HIGH PERFORMING DISTRICTS"**

Exceptions shall be provided for school administrative units designated "Efficient, High Performing Districts." A school administrative unit shall be designated an "Efficient, High Performing District" if:

1. It contains at least three schools identified as "Higher Performing" in the May 2007 Maine Education Policy Research Institute report "The Identification of Higher and Lower Performing Maine Schools"; and
2. Its 2005-06 per-pupil expenditures for system administration represent less than 4% of its total per-pupil expenditures.

**Compromise Bipartisan Working Group Report on School Consolidation
Update to the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs
May 21, 2007 at 1:00 PM**

**The Bipartisan Working Group is composed of members of the
Education Committee, the Appropriations Committee, the Rural Caucus, Interested Parties, and Leadership**

Issue	Report "A"
1. Timeline	* All school districts subject to consolidation with other districts must vote on school consolidation in January 2008 to be implemented on July 1, 2008. * School districts voting not to consolidate in January 2008 must consolidate and be operational by July 1, 2009 in order to avoid penalties that are in addition to the modification to General Purpose for FY 2009 * All School districts not required to consolidate must submit a report to the Commissioner of Education no later than December 1, 2007 that explains the means by which administrative savings will be achieved to meet the reduction in EPS funding. * Beginning July 1, 2008 [FY 2009], a modification of \$36.5 million is made to General Purpose Aid that impacts all school districts to reflect administrative reorganization. * Beginning July 1, 2009 additional penalties will be imposed on school districts that have not yet consolidated.
2. Number of Districts	Legislative Intent for 80 districts
3. Size of School Administrative Units.	The size of each district is based on population density. School districts in counties with a population of less than 100 per square mile must achieve a minimum student population of 1200 students. School districts located in the following counties with a population of more than 100 residents per square mile in: York, Cumberland, Androscoggin, Kennebec, Sagadahoc, Knox, must achieve a minimum student population of 2500 students.
4. Governance	Each school administrative unit will be governed by an executive board assisted by local school committees. Governance is flexible and not prescribed. [May be similar to school union governance].
	Prior to the operation of the Working Group, a bipartisan subcommittee of more than 30 people participated in the development of a compromise school consolidation proposal. Included in this group were members of the Education and Appropriations Committees, bipartisan party leadership, superintendents, and other interested parties. The bipartisan subcommittee agreed to a smaller working group to propose a school consolidation plan.

	Issues in Report "A" That Are in Common with Report "B" - Rural Caucus	
1. Role of Reorganization Planning Committees	The 26 Reorganization Planning Committees work with local regional planning committees to manage the regional planning process, prepare reorganization plans for submission to the Commissioner and local voters, and to facilitate the transition to the new district	
2. Leadership & Direction	Local regional planning Committees provide leadership and direction with the assistance of the Commissioner. The Department will provide necessary data, expertise, and maps to assist in developing the new School Administrative Units	
3. Collaboration	Collaboration among school units and municipalities is encouraged at the earliest possible time, prior to consolidation and following consolidation. Collaboration to achieve savings above the \$36.5 million modification includes, but is not limited to: purchasing of equipment and supplies, purchasing for food and fuel, transportation of students and maintenance of vehicles, preparation of payroll, book-keeping, etc	
4. Budget Transparency	Mandatory summary budget with 11 expenditure articles. Each budget must make a clear link between school spending and any changes in tax rates. There will be a standardized budget format statewide for transparency. If the budget spends more than 100% of EPS, it must show the increase any increase in the tax rate associated with it.	
5. Ultimate approval of consolidated school administrative units	* Determined by Statute with clear criteria. The Commissioner will use the criteria to determine whether the proposed consolidated unit meets statutory requirements. * A Popular vote of the new school administrative unit will be final.	
6. Cost Sharing	Cost sharing formulas are determined by local agreement or private and special law as they are under existing law. Local voters approve cost sharing formulas	
7. Local-only Debt	Local only debt is transferred to the reorganized school unit if the reorganized school unit takes over associated school property	
8. School Closing Procedure	A 2/3 vote of school boards is required to initiate the school closing Procedure.	
9. School Choice	School choice will be recognized and maintained in the new district. This includes independent and private schools.	
10. Exemption from Consolidation	Off-shore Island schools and Tribal schools.	
11.. Issues not Addressed	Education of students from the Unorganized Territory, Incentives, and Penalties	

Report "B" from the Rural Caucus on School Consolidation
Update to the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs
May 21, 2007 at 1:00 PM

**The Bipartisan Working Group is composed of members of the
Education Committee, the Appropriations Committee, the Rural Caucus, Interested Parties, and Leadership**

Issue	Report "B" - Rural Caucus
1. Timeline	* Local districts prepared to consolidate will vote in January 2008 for implementation in July 2008. Fast Track for the Willing and Able * All remaining districts will vote in June 2008 for implementation in July 2009. * All new school units must be operational no later than July 1, 2009. * Beginning July 1, 2008 [FY 2009], a modification of \$36.5 million is made to General Purpose Aid that impacts all school districts to reflect administrative reorganization.
2. Number of Districts	No maximum number of districts
3. Size of School Administrative Units.	Population density determines whether the district is required to have a minimum of 1200 students or 2500 students.
4. Governance	School administrative units and Super Unions
5. Ultimate approval of consolidated school administrative units	Determined by Statute with clear criteria. The Commissioner will use the criteria to determine whether the proposed consolidated unit meets statutory requirements. * The final determination to consolidate [partner with other districts] is made by voters.
6. Exemption from Consolidation	Off-shore Island schools and Tribal schools
7. Issues not Addressed or that need definition	* Education of students from the Unorganized Territory, Incentives, and Penalties * High performing and administratively efficient districts that meet criteria for administrative fiscal efficiency and high academic performance.
8. Collaboration	Collaboration among school units is encouraged at the earliest possible time, prior to consolidation and following consolidation. Collaboration to achieve savings above the \$36.5 million modification includes, but is not limited to: purchasing of equipment and supplies, purchasing for food and fuel, transportation of students and maintenance of vehicles, preparation of payroll, book-keeping, etc

CRITICAL ISSUES

Critical issues that must be addressed in order for the Rural Caucus (Boondock Saints) to support the school reconsolidation.

1. Timeline: Final consolidation by July 1, 2009. (Early votes can be taken if a "district" is ready, with earliest date being November 2007.)
2. Minimum District Size: 1,200 students would be ideal, but regional differentiation is acceptable.
3. Local Vote: A local vote must be taken to approve the new district.
4. Criteria: Criteria for acceptable consolidation must be delineated and not left to the discretion of the DOE.
5. DOE I: DOE and the commission should act as advisors and facilitators for consolidation. They will not have final approval. Disputes will be settled by the Legislative Education Committee.
6. DOE II: DOE should stop their efforts to lead districts to believe a decision has already been made (the Appropriation's Sub-committee report)
7. Specific Savings: Concrete and constructive means for reducing costs must be recommended to the new districts. Arbitrary percentages based on cuts are not acceptable.
8. SADs, Union, etc.: All school administrative units will be allowed to exist within the consolidation structure.
9. School Choice: Where applicable, school choice will be recognized and maintained in the new district. This includes independent and private schools.
10. Penalties: Significant penalties will be established for those school districts, unions, etc., that do not participate to include building and special education funds.
11. Incentives: Significant incentives will be established for new districts that are established by consolidation.
12. Geography: Geography needs to be factored into consideration in establishing a district.
13. School Closing: A super majority vote will be required before a school can be closed.
14. Mandates: Mandates need to be reevaluated and eliminated where applicable.
15. Budget Transparency: The budget should provide a clear and simple explanation of how and where money will be spent.
16. High Schools: it is not necessary for a "new" district to have a high school.
17. EPS/Labor Market: Provide a guarantee that these issues will be addressed in a meaningful way next year.