

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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Date: 6/14/07

Majority

L.D. 910
(Filing No. H-588)

EDUCATION AND CULTURAL AFFAIRS

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STATE OF MAINE
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
123RD LEGISLATURE
FIRST REGULAR SESSION

COMMITTEE AMENDMENT "A" to H.P. 685, L.D. 910, Bill, "An Act To Support Regionalization of Public Schools and Achieve Efficiency and Improve Quality"

Amend the bill by striking out the title and substituting the following:

'An Act To Permit Public Schools in the Lower Kennebec River Area To Regionalize To Achieve Efficiency and Improve Quality'

Amend the bill by striking out everything after the enacting clause and before the summary and inserting the following:

Sec. 1. Definitions. For the purposes of this Act, unless the context otherwise indicates, the following terms have the following meanings.

1. Certificate of organization. "Certificate of organization" has the same meaning as in the Maine Revised Statutes, Title 20-A, section 1203.

2. District. "District" means the state-approved unit of school administration organized by this Act.

3. Eligible municipalities. "Eligible municipalities" means the City of Bath and the towns of Arrowsic, Georgetown, Phippsburg, West Bath and Woolwich.

4. General laws. "General laws" means the general laws of the State.

5. Interim period. "Interim period" means the period from the date of issuance by the State Board of Education of a certificate of organization for the district through and including June 30, 2008.

6. Participating members. "Participating members" means the eligible municipalities that have voted to accept this Act pursuant to section 22 or who subsequently join the district.

7. Regional school unit. "Regional school unit" has the same meaning as in the Maine Revised Statutes, Title 20-A, section 1, subsection 24-B.

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1 **Sec. 2. Organization.** Subject to the provisions of this Act, the school
2 administrative units of the participating members are merged into and organized as a
3 regional school unit to become operative on July 1, 2008, which shall provide public
4 education to all public school students of the participating members under and pursuant to
5 the terms of this Act.

6 **Sec. 3. Purposes.** The district replaces the units of school administration of the
7 participating members in order to improve the efficiency and quality of public education
8 and for all other purposes described in this Act and in the general laws. The district
9 serves as the state-approved unit of school administration to provide public education to
10 all public school students in the district and is a regional school unit created under the
11 provisions of this Act for purposes of the Maine Revised Statutes, Title 20-A, chapter
12 103-A and all other general laws.

13 **Sec. 4. Name; certificate of organization.** Upon receipt of the voting results
14 from the eligible municipalities on the question whether to accept this Act, the State
15 Board of Education shall determine if the Act has been accepted by the minimum
16 threshold of participating members under section 22 to be effective and, if so, shall issue
17 an interim certificate of organization in accordance with the general laws to the secretary
18 of the school committee of each participating municipality. The board of directors
19 elected in the interim period shall approve an official name for the district and shall file
20 that name with the State Board of Education. The State Board of Education shall then
21 issue an amended certificate of organization for the district that must include the official
22 name.

23 **Sec. 5. Applicability of general law.** The district and its board of directors are
24 subject to and have the powers, duties, benefits and authority conferred by this Act and,
25 to the extent not inconsistent with this Act, the Maine Revised Statutes, Title 20-A,
26 chapter 103-A and other general laws relating to public education and applicable to
27 regional school units.

28 **Sec. 6. Effect of statewide consolidation.** Nothing contained in this Act
29 prevents the district from being organized as a regional school unit on the same terms
30 and conditions as the Legislature provides for regional school units throughout the State
31 by Public Law 2007, chapter 240, Part XXXX to the extent not inconsistent with this Act.

32 **Sec. 7. Applicability of local charters.** In the event of any inconsistency
33 between this Act, or the general laws incorporated by reference in this Act, and a
34 participating member's charter or ordinance, this Act or, as applicable, the general laws
35 control, and the inconsistent charter or ordinance provision must be deemed to be
36 amended or repealed to the extent of the inconsistency. Without limitation of this section,
37 the amounts raised, collected and paid by the City of Bath for district assessments may
38 not be considered expenditures of the city subject to the limitations on municipal
39 expenditures of section 617 of the city's charter; and section 606, "School Budget
40 Component," and other provisions of the city charter applicable to the "School Budget
41 Component" do not apply to district assessments. The participating members shall raise,
42 collect and pay district assessments in accordance with this Act.

43 **Sec. 8. Apportionment of board of directors; voting precincts.** The initial
44 method of representation is the subdistrict method of representation as described in the

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1 Maine Revised Statutes, Title 20-A, section 1252, except that the boundaries must be
2 determined as provided in this section, and the boundaries of each subdistrict must be
3 drawn to include residents of more than one participating member and to divide residents
4 of each participating member between at least 2 subdistricts. Each subdistrict must be
5 represented by one member of the board of directors, who must reside in the subdistrict.
6 The term of each board member is 3 years, except as provided in this Act, for the
7 purposes of staggering the terms of the initial board members by draw of lots. No later
8 than 7 days following the effective date of this Act, the superintendents of the eligible
9 municipalities in consultation with the school committees of the eligible municipalities
10 shall submit to the Commissioner of Education a written boundary plan containing 9
11 proposed subdistricts. The commissioner shall approve that boundary plan upon
12 determining that the proposed subdistricts are of approximately equal size as determined
13 by the latest Federal Decennial Census or Federal Estimated Census and that the
14 proposed district is apportioned in accordance with the principles of one person, one vote.
15 If the commissioner determines that the submittal does not satisfy these requirements, the
16 commissioner shall make recommendations for a revised boundary plan to be submitted
17 in accordance with this Act. If the commissioner does not issue a determination within
18 14 days of a submittal, the commissioner is deemed to have approved that submittal. If
19 one or more of the eligible municipalities does not accept this Act pursuant to section 22,
20 the superintendents of the participating municipalities, in consultation with the school
21 committees of the participating municipalities, shall promptly submit to the commissioner
22 a revised boundary plan containing 7 subdistricts instead of 9. The commissioner shall
23 act upon the revised boundary plan in the same manner as the plan originally submitted.
24 Because the subdistricts include more than one municipality, the elections of board
25 members are governed to the extent applicable by the procedures of Title 20-A, section
26 1253 for the election of board members under Method A, subdistrict representation,
27 except as provided in this Act for election of the initial board of directors. The election
28 secretary, as selected under section 9, shall determine the date on which a subdistrict
29 election must be called by the respective municipal officers and shall notify the municipal
30 clerks of the subdistrict election date. The voting list maintained by the municipal clerk
31 of each participating municipality must identify the subdistrict of each registered voter of
32 the participating municipality. The registered voters of a subdistrict shall vote in the
33 municipalities of their respective registrations. Nothing in this section prevents the
34 district from changing its method of representation in accordance with the general laws,
35 in which case the method of election of board members is the applicable method under
36 the general laws, or from changing the boundaries of its subdistricts and the number of its
37 subdistricts and board members for purposes of reapportionment or reorganization as
38 permitted under the general laws. In the event a municipality joins or is added to the
39 district, that municipality becomes a participating member subject to this Act.

40 **Sec. 9. Initial board of directors; transition.** The election of the initial board
41 of directors must occur as provided under section 8, except as provided in this section.
42 The election date for the initial board of directors must be determined by vote of a joint
43 meeting of the school committees of the participating members after the State Board of
44 Education has issued the certificate of organization. For purposes of establishing the
45 election date, the school committees at the joint meeting shall establish deadlines for
46 furnishing and filing nomination papers, so that the election may occur on or before
47 February 1, 2008. The school committees at the joint meeting shall select an election

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1 secretary, who must be a superintendent of one or more of the participating members.
2 The election secretary shall perform the duties of the secretary under section 8. The
3 school committees of the participating members shall in joint meeting total the votes cast
4 for each candidate within each subdistrict and shall immediately notify the clerks in each
5 municipality, the candidates and the Commissioner of Education of the results of the
6 vote, and of the date of the first meeting of the initial board of directors. The oath of
7 office of each initial board member must be filed with the election secretary for
8 safekeeping and delivery to the secretary of the district. The terms of office must be
9 staggered by draw of lots as provided by the Maine Revised Statutes, Title 20-A, chapter
10 103-A. During the interim period, the board of directors shall elect officers, hire a
11 superintendent and prepare a budget for submission to the voters of the district for the
12 2008-09 fiscal year. The initial board of directors shall make such other arrangements as
13 it considers necessary to prepare for the district to be operational July 1, 2008. The terms
14 of the school committee members who are in office on the effective date of this Act end
15 June 30, 2008. During the interim period, the school committees of the participating
16 members shall cooperate with the initial board of directors for purposes of the transition.
17 During the interim period, the initial board of directors also is authorized to file
18 applications for school construction projects and, during the period before the initial
19 board of directors is elected, those applications may be filed jointly by the participating
20 members.

21 **Sec. 10. Supermajority to close district schools.** For a period of 5 years from
22 the operative date of the district, a 2/3 vote of the board of directors is required to
23 authorize an elementary school within the district to be closed, unless the school building
24 has been condemned or replaced by a school construction project approved by the district
25 voters. The closure of a school building also is subject to any other requirements of the
26 general laws.

27 **Sec. 11. Cost sharing; changes in cost sharing.** For the purpose of local cost
28 sharing, the provisions of the Maine Revised Statutes, Title 20-A, section 15688,
29 subsection 3-A do not apply to the participating members. The local costs of the district
30 must be allocated to the participating members as follows:

31 **1. Valuation.** One-third must be allocated based on the property fiscal capacity of
32 each participating member;

33 **2. Pupil count.** One-third must be allocated based on the most recent calendar year
34 average pupil count of each participating member; and

35 **3. Population.** One-third must be allocated based on the population of each
36 participating member as determined by the latest Federal Decennial Census or Federal
37 Estimated Census.

38 In fiscal year 2008-09, the share of local costs that the district allocates to a
39 participating member must be reduced by the amount of funds the participating member
40 has transferred to the district pursuant to this Act to the extent the funds are not allocated
41 to expenditures of the participating member.

42 After 3 budget years, the district shall report to the joint standing committee of the
43 Legislature having jurisdiction over education matters on its experience with determining
44 the contributions of the participating members for local costs under this Act and on other

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1 methods of determining the contributions that might be preferable within the district. The
2 other methods, if any, may include the results of a nonbinding election or as applicable
3 town meeting votes in each participating municipality. The method of sharing the local
4 costs of the district may be changed after the first 3 budget years of the district in the
5 manner provided by the general laws, or, if the general laws at any time do not permit a
6 change in cost sharing, by district referendum called by the board of directors.

7 **Sec. 12. Three-year transitional adjustment.** In addition to maintenance of
8 state debt service subsidy as provided in section 13, during the first 3 years of operation
9 the amount of state subsidy for the total cost of education under the State's funding model
10 for the district must be adjusted by the amount the participating members would in the
11 aggregate have received, as estimated by the Department of Education, had the district
12 not been organized so as to be not less than that aggregate amount. Notwithstanding the
13 method of sharing local costs under this Act, if the district's assessment of a participating
14 member would cause an increase from the amount raised for education by that
15 participating member for the prior year, the board of directors shall use the amounts
16 under this section, if any, for that year to more closely equalize the year-to-year
17 percentage increase with the percentage increases in the amounts required to be raised by
18 the other participating members.

19 **Sec. 13. Maintenance of state debt service subsidy.** The organization of the
20 district does not affect any state subsidy of existing debt or the relative portion of any
21 existing debt of a participating member paid or reimbursed by the State, including lease
22 and lease-purchase obligations, or the relative portion forgiven by the State of any school
23 revolving renovation fund loan to a participating member.

24 **Sec. 14. Transfer of assets and liabilities.** The transfer of assets and liabilities,
25 including the assets and liabilities related to the Bath Regional Vocational Center, are
26 governed by this section.

27 **1. Transfer of assets.** Upon issuance of a certificate of organization, the transfer of
28 school property and assets from the participating members to the district must occur in
29 accordance with the Maine Revised Statutes, Title 20-A, chapter 103-A. With respect to
30 any restrictions on ownership and operation of school facilities and equipment financed
31 with tax-exempt bonds, the district is deemed the successor to the issuer of the bonds for
32 purposes of school administration.

33 **2. District responsibility for liabilities incurred prior to effective date.** For all
34 debt issued prior to the effective date of this Act by a participating member for school
35 construction, school renovation and school equipment, not funded directly to the
36 participating member through state debt service subsidy, the district shall make timely
37 payments to the participating member in amounts sufficient to meet the participating
38 member's scheduled debt service payments. The district shall make these payments even
39 if the district has not elected to receive a transfer of the school property funded by that
40 debt. The district shall assume and otherwise agree to pay other contractual liabilities
41 incurred for school purposes by a participating member prior to the effective date of this
42 Act, including lease and lease-purchase agreements, transportation contracts and
43 construction, architectural and other school service contracts, if any. Nothing in this Act
44 requires a participating member or the district to renew, extend or continue any contract
45 other than in accordance with its terms.

1 **3. Completion of ongoing Bath renovation project financing.** If the City of Bath
2 issues bonds or notes in an amount not to exceed \$2,900,000 for school renovations and
3 improvements, the district shall also make timely payments to the city in amounts
4 sufficient to meet the city's scheduled debt service payments on those obligations. If the
5 city has authorized the school renovation bonds but has not yet issued all of the
6 authorized permanent bonds as of July 1, 2008, the city and the board of directors of the
7 district shall consult with recognized bond counsel to determine whether the city or the
8 district shall issue the permanent bonds or notes necessary to finance the completion of
9 that project and to refund temporary notes that the city has issued in anticipation of
10 permanent bonds for that project. In the event that bond counsel advises that the district
11 should issue the permanent bonds, no action by the voters of the district is required. The
12 bonds at any time outstanding for the renovation project may not exceed the amount
13 authorized by the city except to the extent necessary to refund temporary notes on a
14 current basis. If the district issues bonds to complete the school renovation projects
15 begun by the city and to refund the city's temporary notes issued for that purpose, those
16 bonds must be issued in the name of the district and otherwise must be in the form and
17 must be subject to the procedural requirements provided by the Maine Revised Statutes,
18 Title 20-A, chapter 103-A, except as provided by this subsection. In the event that bond
19 counsel advises that the city should issue the permanent bonds, the district shall make
20 timely payments to the city in amounts sufficient to meet the city's scheduled debt service
21 payments.

22 **4. Transfer of other liabilities incurred during interim period.** The district may
23 assume any other contractual liabilities of the participating members if approved by the
24 district's board of directors during or following the interim period. An approval may not
25 be withheld if the participating member issued the bond or entered into the contract in the
26 normal course of its management of the schools for an essential school purpose or to
27 replace its existing facilities and existing equipment or to keep them in a condition
28 comparable to that on the effective date of this Act.

29 **5. Exception for certain liabilities.** Notwithstanding this section, the district is not
30 required to assume or pay any contract or liability of a participating member if prior to
31 July 1, 2008 the participating member has defaulted in or failed to satisfy a payment
32 obligation or has recklessly or intentionally taken any action or failed to take any action
33 constituting a material breach of its obligations under the contract or has notice of any
34 material breach and has failed to take all reasonable steps to cure the breach.

35 **Sec. 15. Transfer of teachers and employees.** Except as provided in
36 subsection 1, all teachers and school employees who are employed by a participating
37 member on June 30, 2008 must be transferred to and employed by the district as of July
38 1, 2008. Except as provided in subsection 2, the district shall assume all of the legal
39 obligations and duties that the participating members owed to their employees, including
40 but not limited to those obligations and duties arising under federal law, state law,
41 collective bargaining agreements and individual employment contracts. It is the intent of
42 this Act to neither decrease nor increase the rights and benefits of transferred employees
43 or the employer.

44 **1. Teachers or other employees not transferred.** Teachers or other employees
45 whose employment terminates by application of law or contract or by action of a
46 participating member before July 1, 2008 may not be transferred.

1 **2. Teachers and other employees transferred prior to completion of**
2 **probationary period.** Teachers and other employees who are transferred to the district
3 prior to the completion of the applicable probationary period for their positions must have
4 the length of their probationary period calculated from the date of their most recent date
5 of employment by the participating member.

6 **3. Membership in Maine State Retirement System participating local district**
7 **plan.** Membership in the Maine State Retirement participating local district plan for
8 employees who are not teachers as defined in the Maine Revised Statutes, Title 5, section
9 17001, subsection 42 is limited to those who were members of the Maine State
10 Retirement System on the effective date of this Act.

11 **Sec. 16. Collective bargaining.** The provisions of this section apply to collective
12 bargaining.

13 **1. District board of directors to assume duties.** On July 1, 2008, the district board
14 of directors shall assume all of the obligations, duties, liabilities and rights of the
15 participating members for all purposes under the Maine Revised Statutes, Title 26,
16 chapter 9-A.

17 **2. Bargaining units.** Notwithstanding any other provision of law, bargaining units
18 that existed in the participating members are merged July 1, 2008 as follows:

19 A. One bargaining unit composed of all certified teachers and other certified
20 professional employees, excluding principals and other administrators employed by
21 the district;

22 B. One bargaining unit composed of all secretaries and educational technicians
23 employed by the district; and

24 C. One bargaining unit composed of all custodians and food service workers
25 employed by the district.

26 **3. Bargaining agents.** Acknowledging the majority representative status of certain
27 bargaining agents as of the effective date of this Act, the bargaining agents of the merged
28 units that are established pursuant to subsection 2 are, on and after July 1, 2008:

29 A. For the bargaining unit of teachers and other certified professionals, a local
30 affiliate of and chartered by the Maine Education Association selected by the existing
31 bargaining agents and the Maine Education Association by July 1, 2008;

32 B. For the bargaining unit of secretaries and educational technicians, a local affiliate
33 of and chartered by the Maine Education Association selected by the existing
34 bargaining agents and the Maine Education Association by July 1, 2008; and

35 C. For the bargaining unit of custodians and food service workers, the American
36 Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, or a local affiliate of and
37 chartered by it and selected by the existing bargaining agents and the American
38 Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees by July 1, 2008.

39 **4. Collective bargaining.** If a bargaining agent identified in subsection 3 and the
40 district mutually agree, negotiations for collective bargaining agreements between the
41 agent and the district for the merged unit may commence July 1, 2008. Until new
42 collective bargaining agreements are executed, prior collective bargaining agreements

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1 must be honored as provided in paragraph B. When the prior collective bargaining
2 agreement has expired, the parties shall maintain the status quo with respect to mandatory
3 subjects of bargaining in accordance with the Maine Revised Statutes, Title 26, chapter
4 9-A.

5 A. A collective bargaining agreement between the participating members and
6 existing bargaining agents executed between the effective date of this Act and June
7 30, 2008 may not extend beyond August 31, 2010.

8 B. If a bargaining agent identified in subsection 3 and the district do not mutually
9 agree to commence negotiations as provided in this subsection, any unexpired
10 collective bargaining agreement must be honored to its expiration date unless
11 mutually agreed to otherwise by the public employer and the bargaining agent. A
12 collective bargaining agreement must be bargained on an interim basis for a segment
13 of a merged bargaining unit to the extent required so that all collective bargaining
14 agreements expire on the same date.

15 **Sec. 17. School advisory groups.** The board of directors may establish an
16 advisory group for each school of the district and may select parents and other residents
17 to serve in each school advisory group.

18 **Sec. 18. School choice.** The board of directors shall establish and from time to
19 time amend a school choice plan to permit parents and guardians to select which public
20 school of the district their children will attend. Any choice under a plan may be made
21 subject to grades taught at that school, space and programming availability and other
22 factors determined by the board of directors. Priority must be given to neighborhood
23 students and students that reside in a participating municipality with no elementary school
24 and then to others as the plan may specify. The board of directors may establish all
25 guidelines and procedures to implement the school choice plan.

26 **Sec. 19. Existing tuition arrangements.** If a student that qualifies for a public
27 education by the district is attending a school that is not operated by the district under a
28 paid tuition arrangement of a participating member in effect for the 2007-2008 school
29 year, that student may continue to attend that school through the year of that student's
30 graduating class under the paid tuition arrangement, and a younger sibling of that student
31 also may attend that school under the paid tuition arrangement. In each of these cases,
32 the district is responsible for the tuition cost in accordance with the general laws and
33 applicable tuition agreement, if any, provided that the rate of tuition the district is
34 required to pay does not exceed a rate computed in the same manner as the statewide
35 average per student cost is computed on the effective date of this Act. This section
36 applies only to an eligible municipality that approves this Act on or before November 8,
37 2007. The board of directors may adopt and amend from time to time a policy to
38 determine any relationships in addition to full-sibling and half-sibling relationships that
39 may qualify for purposes of this section.

40 **Sec. 20. Budget format and procedure.** The format and procedure for the
41 school budget to be presented to the voters are the cost center summary budget format
42 and the budget validation referendum procedure, or as may be otherwise required by the
43 general laws. Separate articles or questions may be used to raise and appropriate funds for
44 the adult education budget and other sums that are not part of the annual prekindergarten-

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1 to-grade-12 school budget. The format and procedure may only be changed to the extent,
2 if any, permitted or required by the Maine Revised Statutes, Title 20-A, chapter 103-A.

3 **Sec. 21. Woolwich construction project.** This section applies only if the Town
4 of Woolwich is a participating member. The costs for the Town of Woolwich's school
5 construction project currently on the State's priority list remains the responsibility of the
6 town during the interim period, but the town's school committee and the initial board of
7 directors of the district have joint decision-making responsibility for that project.
8 Department of Education and State Board of Education approvals for that project are not
9 affected by the assumption of that project by the district, and those approvals are deemed
10 to be approvals of the district. If the project is ready for referendum approval before July
11 1, 2008, the board of directors is authorized to conduct a referendum for the project and
12 its financing by the district in accordance with the general laws. The referendum may
13 occur during the interim period. Following the interim period, the board of directors is
14 responsible for the financing of that project if approved by the voters of the district. The
15 organization of the district does not affect any state subsidy of debt for this project or the
16 relative portion of that debt paid or reimbursed by the State. The district shall give the
17 Town of Woolwich a reduction in its assessment of the town for costs paid by the Town
18 of Woolwich that are approved by the State Board of Education for inclusion in the
19 project budget and incurred in anticipation of the issuance of refunding bonds for the
20 project.

21 **Sec. 22. Municipal balloting.** The municipal officers of each eligible
22 municipality shall submit this Act to a vote of the residents on or before November 6,
23 2007. Filing and publication requirements, to the extent applicable, may be shortened by
24 the respective municipal officers to comply with this deadline. In the City of Bath, this
25 Act must be submitted to a vote at a referendum election conducted according to the city
26 charter and the laws governing city elections. In each of the other eligible municipalities,
27 this Act must be submitted to a referendum at town meeting under the procedures of the
28 Maine Revised Statutes, Title 30-A, section 2528 and any applicable municipal charter.
29 For purposes of approving this Act, the municipal officers of each participating member
30 shall place a question in substantially the following form before the voters:

31 "Do you favor joining with other schools in the lower Kennebec River
32 area to form a regional school unit?"

33 The municipal officers of an eligible municipality shall file with the State Board of
34 Education an attested return of the voting results in that municipality. The district must
35 be organized under this Act only if the Act is accepted by a majority of the legal voters
36 voting on the question in the City of Bath and in at least 3 of the 5 other eligible
37 municipalities, in which case the district consists of those approving municipalities, and
38 the eligible municipalities that have not accepted this Act are not participating members
39 of the district by virtue of this Act.'

40 **SUMMARY**

41 This amendment is the majority report of the Joint Standing Committee on Education
42 and Cultural Affairs. The amendment strikes and replaces the bill to authorize the school
43 administrative units of the City of Bath and the towns of Arrowsic, Georgetown,
44 Phippsburg, West Bath and Woolwich to merge into and organize as a single regional

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1 school unit to become operative July 1, 2008. The amendment provides that, upon a vote
2 of the residents of these municipalities, the respective school administrative units become
3 participating members of this regional school unit. This amendment includes in section
4 12 a 3-year transitional adjustment to the state subsidy for the total cost of education.

5 **FISCAL NOTE REQUIRED**
6 (See attached)



123rd MAINE LEGISLATURE

LD 910

LR 705(02)

An Act To Support Regionalization of Public Schools and Achieve Efficiency and Improve Quality

Fiscal Note for Bill as Amended by Committee Amendment "A"

Committee: Education and Cultural Affairs

Fiscal Note Required: Yes

Fiscal Note

No State fiscal impact

Fiscal Detail and Notes

This bill will not affect the total cost of K-12 public education or the General Fund appropriation required to fund the State's share beginning in fiscal year 2008-09. This bill may affect the amount of state subsidy received by local school units. The impact to individual school units can not be determined at this time but is not expected to be significant.