

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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To The Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs:

Seven children attend Monhegan's K-8, one-room school. Twelve miles of open ocean separate these students, in grades one, three, five, six, and eight, from any other classroom. Two older students have to leave home to attend secondary schools inshore. From November to May, the mail boat (not a State ferry) makes three trips per week to the Island, weather permitting. ***Monhegan Island is not a "commutable" distance from anywhere.***

Our Island school is set apart by other differences: There is no transportation budget; all students walk to school. There is no hot lunch program; students walk home for lunch. There is no gym or after-school sports program, but a pond to skate on and hills to slide down. There is no security guard at the front door; the building is left unlocked. There is no municipal water supply in the winter; the school has its own well. Island generated power is fifty-five cents per kilowatt hour. There is no building principal. There are no snow days. Every child has a laptop. There is no school debt. ***This year's annual budget is \$150,000; the State will contribute approximately one percent of that - \$2,000.***

A dedicated three-member school committee, a part-time superintendent, a truly remarkable teacher, and a supporting staff of part-time local and professional help take our tax dollars and turn them into gold: **education that teaches each child.** Community members further enrich the classroom with volunteered time, talents, and expertise. ***Island students' test scores are well above grade level, but are not part of State record because of State criteria relating to class size.***

This school is a square peg in a round hole; geographic isolation, high teacher to student ratio, multi-age classroom, high per-pupil cost, and a unique calendar all contribute to make it "non-conforming." But the Monhegan Island School, like many other small schools in Maine, has been able, with full support of its local citizenry, to evolve a means of offering an education to its children that meets and exceeds standards set by the Maine Department of Education. ***Now we are being asked to give up local school boards, locally elected, legally bound, barely paid advocates of both parents and community. We are being asked to give up local control of tax dollars and accountability to local taxpayers. We are being asked to give up ownership of our school.***

For one hundred and fifty years, our Community Building has stood on land deeded to the Monhegan Island Plantation. It has housed both municipal governance and the education of Island children. At Town Meeting, voters are surrounded by science and art projects, maps, poems and classroom guidelines, outward signs of where a community votes to place its tax dollars. ***We trust that our state legislators will protect our right to cast that vote, not ask that we sign the right over to others.***

Sincerely, *Kathie Iannicelli*

Kathie Iannicelli, P.O. Box 131, Monhegan Island, ME, 04852, 207-596-6732

My name is Michael Gosselin, a citizen of Oakland. I am a retired teacher and I currently am chair of the Board of Directors of SAD 47 in Oakland Belgrade and Sidney. I wish to take this opportunity to implore you to bring some degree of sanity to this matter of school reorganization that has been thrust upon us by the Governor.

Let me say at the outset that I support a well-planned reorganization of the way educational services are delivered to Maine school children. There is nothing magic about the ways school departments are now configured. The current structure in most any school department comes as the result of evolution of certain practices put in place to stretch resources available to meet local needs. If we were to turn back the calendar a hundred years, I dare say we would probably not have the same configuration that we have today. It is probably very sound thinking to step back from time to time so to look at local practices and to see how those practices could be improved.

Let me repeat: I support a well-planned reorganization of the way educational services are delivered to Maine school children. This is not the first time schools have been restructured. In 1957, the Sinclair Act created the structure by which schools could pool resources to become SADs. It took eight years for the towns of Oakland, Belgrade and Sidney to come together as Sad 47 in 1965. I am not sure why it took eight years for three towns to come together. The important thing is that they did it when they were ready. Forcing the issue to resolution in 17 months is idiotic, insane and insensitive to our needs. The choice of deadline is arbitrary and about to be imposed on us allegedly to save tax dollars. Rushing to change for the sake of change can be wasteful rather than helpful. Give us time to coalesce into larger districts, with incentives when we make it or with penalties when we don't.

I have heard that the cost to operate the Maine legislature is high, ranking third highest in the country. Perhaps those of you elected to the House could set an example of this cockamamie plan and enact legislation that would reduce the size of the House from 151 to, say, 26? Or maybe avoid the duplication that comes with a second legislative body by deep-sixing the Senate. If you are truly serious about saving tax dollars, I will expect to see such a proposal very soon. Ah, but I digress.

Governor Baldacci should spare us the rhetoric about improving education in Maine; his plan is all about money—money paid to people for the jobs they do. He thinks we pay far too much for non-instructional tasks done by superintendents, business managers and the like. Perhaps we do. The trouble is his estimate of dollar savings (\$250 M over three years; \$83.3 M per yr.) is a far stretch from reality. To save \$83 M a year, one would have to furlough 830 superintendents at \$100K. The trouble is we are considering giving pink slips to 130 or so, saving \$13 M. We don't pay central office clerical people very much, let's say \$20K per person and each superintendent who walks the plank takes 10 clericals with him/her. That saves another 26 M., \$39 M total, less than half of the Governor's estimate. I don't know where you can find another \$44M without drastic cuts in the classroom..

Just in case you missed it, I support a well-planned reorganization of the way educational services are delivered to Maine school children. I do not support any plan that causes an arbitrary rush to judgment. I do not want to be misled by any public official, including the commissioner and the governor. Give us time and a little encouragement; policy makers and educators in Maine will deliver a leaner way to educate our children.

Michael Gosselin
February 05, 2007

Judy Stone, China School Committee

The China School Committee is opposed to the governor's current plan, although we do support well-thought out initiatives in regional cooperation.

The governor's plan arbitrarily divides the state according to technical training centers, without recognizing historical community ties, pre-existing cooperative arrangements, or even transportation efficiency. For example, China would be placed into the Augusta district, where the nearest public high school is now attended by only a few China students each year, and is farther away than our three most popular receiving high schools.

The governor's plan applies a one-size fits all approach to communities with dramatically different problems and histories of success. Rather than dismantling our entire administrative structure, we can learn from successes of those districts and unions that do operate efficiently. Essential Programs and Services has given us a benchmark to compare efficiency, and has spurred local boards and administrators to cut costs without sacrificing quality. For example, in China, we share transportation planning, food services, oversight of buildings, and teachers with other schools. China's per student cost of education is among the lowest in Central Maine. LD1 is working. The local share for education in our town has decreased for the past two years, and last year the mil rate decreased by 0.9.

On a larger scale, the governor's plan reduces school districts to an absurdly low number, with the end result that the 26 superintendents and boards could not possibly adequately supervise all of Maine's schools, and bloated middle-level bureaucracies will almost certainly be the result. While some districts may benefit from consolidation, it makes sense to take some time to think about how best to proceed in re-creating new administrative structures, as advocated by most of the plans presented here. The expertise of our current superintendents will be very useful in helping us to devise new structures, and it would be a mistake to pink-slip all of them just when we will most need their help.

The plans presented today have many excellent ideas. For example, LR 1386 directs that we identify and repeal or redesign unnecessary state mandates. We could save money and make more use of the hours in a day if the Maine Learning Results and requirements for local assessment were more streamlined, with a focus on math and literacy. The legislature must pass a bill containing elements of these plans that move thoughtfully to increase efficiency without sacrificing the quality of our children's education.

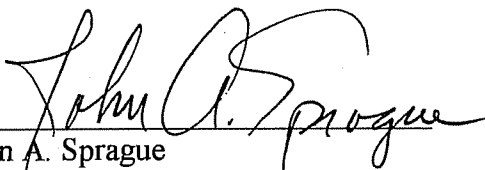
What I want to say to this committee concerning:

THE GOVERNOR'S SCHOOL CONSOLIDATION PLAN

My name is John Sprague from Marshfield, Maine.

My Background:

1. I am Chairperson of the Marshfield School Board (Union 102)
 2. I have been a classroom teacher for 46 years.
 3. Six (6) of those 46 years I was a teaching Principal.
 4. I have taught in 6 different schools.
-
1. **Concerning education, LOCAL CONTROL should NEVER, NEVER, NEVER be taken away.**
 2. I want to repeat # 1 , local control should always be the controlling factor in education, not the state.
 3. Before any major changes are made in education, please consult the people that made education possible; the teachers. (We notice that the teachers were right about the local assessments, but no one believed the teachers. By the way, you should also listen to them about the MAINE LEARNING RESULTS.)
 4. I recommend that any person that is hired by the Department of Education or is on any committee dealing with education from the state level should have at least 10 to 12 years of classroom experience. If you had done this in the past we would not be here today. (Some of you that are sitting here today have never taught a day in your life. Many that I have dealt with from the state just create their own job.)
 5. Some disciplines such as Industrial Arts, Home Ec., and Business are going by the board because they do not meet the Maine Learning Results.
 6. **KEEP LOCAL CONTROL IN EDUCATION.**


John A. Sprague

February 5, 2007



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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

Judy Stone, China School Committee

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TO: Joint Standing Committees on Appropriations and Education
FROM: Robert Ervin, Superintendent of Schools, Bangor School Department
DATE: February 5, 2006

RE: Concerns with Consolidation

I will address only two concerns, one of process and one of product. Others can elaborate on the fine points of school district consolidation.

1. The rationale for the selection of consolidated school districts under the Governor's and a variety of other plans is a mystery. I hope that it will not turn out to be a murder mystery. I refer not to the concept of consolidation, which is laudable, but to the method of consolidation. The selection of twenty-six regional vocational districts was as arbitrary as picking sixteen county districts or thirty-five senatorial jurisdictions. Realizing that the Governor is petrified by the prospect of another property tax referendum but seems unable or unwilling to address comprehensive tax reform, he has selected school administration expenditure as a budgetary target, uncomfortable for school administrators but reasonably presented in *Charting Maine's Future*.

Knowing that money trumps rationality but believing that there are less traumatic ways for two school districts to become one, I propose the immediate creation and implementation of a Realignment Commission. Current consolidation designs seem to be little more than intellectual speculation on how much a certain "ideal" size district will save. Districts are being thrown together. We are headed toward shotgun weddings to which everyone brings a shotgun.

Without overstatement, the blueprint for the creation and operation of this Commission can be found at www.brac.gov. Members would be independent, politically untouchable, intelligent individuals who bring a thorough knowledge of Maine geography, history, economics, and education to the table. Self-serving "representation" should be avoided. Similar to the BRAC, they would hear testimony on reorganization, efficiency, and proposed unification from school districts, experts, and scholars. In one year the Commission would present, for a single vote, a logical and meritorious phased reduction in school districts that would insure student learning and the economic future of our state.

2. Not that it is important when compared to money, but student achievement has been noticeably absent from the rampant consolidation discussion. The Commissioner is implying, trust me. I cannot. In her plan, the preservation and improvement of student achievement rests squarely on the shoulders of the new School Advisory Councils(SAC), a weak variation of the Site-based Management (SBM) Team. A failed school management approach largely discarded in recent years, in its time SBM showed little ability to improve student performance, primarily because it could not address the complex issues of curriculum and instruction. Peterson(1991) states, "research as a whole does not indicate that site-based management brings consistent or stable improvement student performance." Last time I checked, that is exactly what schools are trying to do. In fact, SBM often becomes a distractor and an inhibitor with teams consumed and frustrated by trivia. In Maine, SACs will not even have authority or accountability. What is especially peculiar is the attempt to simultaneously centralize and decentralize education with nothing in the middle.

Nevertheless, the Commissioner is entrusting the achievement of Maine children to this model. Far removed from the Central Office and spread out across the landscape, SACs will flounder. Guaranteed. The notion that the state will provide useful assistance is laughable. When have they ever? It is for this reason that any consolidation must result in districts of a structural size that encourages, not restricts, top-down and bottom-up dialogue. Jumping to an archaic failed design may be a nice political solution, but it will not improve student achievement.

"School-based management and Student Performance." Petersen, D., NASSP ERIC Digest 61(1991).

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To: Members of the Joint Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs
Members of the Joint Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs

From: Barbara J. Gunn, Director, Old Town Regional Program

Date: February 5, 2007

Re: Regionalization Initiatives

I appreciate this opportunity to present testimony on the proposed legislation from the Governor and legislators calling for regionalization of school administration.

I have been extremely fortunate to be involved with the Southern Penobscot Regional Programs for Children with Exceptionalities (SPRPCE) over the past sixteen years. The SPRPCE is a collaborative partnership involving fourteen school districts. The SPRPCE regional programs date back to 1979 when the regional superintendents committed to regionalization efforts in order to keep their high needs' populations in local programs and schools. Their efforts were driven by their desire to provide high quality services to their students. I am extremely proud to continue to work with our regional superintendents who remain committed to quality regionalization efforts. My experiences in the SPRPCE include serving as the Regional Administrator of the SPRPCE for two years as well as spending the last ten years as the Director of the Old Town Regional Program, a regional K-12 facility serving students with significant emotional disabilities within the SPRPCE region which prevent them from being educated in their home schools. The school districts in which comprise the SPRPCE have, without a doubt, demonstrated the most regionalized effort in special education in the state of Maine. It is with this experience and background that I present this testimony.

I strongly support the vision of increasing regionalization in our state. Our region has many goals and intentions in common with those in the bills before you. These include increased collaboration among districts, sharing of resources, cost savings, quality programs and services, consistency across districts, professional development, sharing of staff, and common graduation and diploma requirements.

I know that there is an interest in replicating what we have done regionally in other regions throughout the state. Several regions have met with me and looked at my program with a strong interest in developing their own. Despite the strong desire and interest to do this, there are some obstacles and hurdles which have prevented implementation or have prevented people in moving from the planning stage to the implementation phase. Some examples include MEDMS, MEA's, reporting of AYP, MaineCare audits, facilities, access to technology, and lack of agreement and varied interpretations of requirements, guidelines and procedures throughout the state. It would be disastrous to be forced to commit to regionalization before it can be implemented in a successful manner. It is essential that these obstacles and hurdles be further studied in order to identify barriers so they can be fine tuned. I have been asked to participate in a Regional Program Development State Conference sponsored by the DOE and MADSEC to be held in March. Interest in this workshop was expressed by several regions last fall and in October, Nancy Connolly, from the DOE, approached me about participating in the training. In two days, the registration for this conference reached capacity. A waiting list is being compiled. This is yet another indication in the interest in regionalization throughout the state.

There are key components essential to regionalization efforts. These include trust, careful planning, development of a clear vision and mission, and preparing people for change. There are three "C's" at the heart of this partnership, and they cannot be mandated, forced or legislated. They are commitment, cooperation and collaboration. Reducing administration and centralizing districts, while possibly saving money, will not assure the development of regional collaboration, commitment and cooperation or create excellence in education. These require that we put our efforts into the time necessary to study and build regional collaboratives. Gov. Baldacci has said he wants action, no more time and study. I caution you, in order for these efforts to be successful, a reasonable but responsible timeline and study are essential.

We need to take the time necessary to assure that the changes regionalization will bring will improve the delivery of instruction to our children, not just save money. Begin by looking at current collaborative efforts throughout the state and expand in a planned and thoughtful manner from there. The SPRPCE has been cited as an example by the Governor and the Commissioner in their regional forums despite the fact that they have not recently taken any time to talk with our region about regionalization efforts. Other states have been cited by the Governor and the Commissioner. Many of their answers at the recent forums throughout the state referred to regionalization efforts in other states. Let's take time to look at what we are doing well in this state and build from there.

My name is Joanne Krawic. I am the soon to be retired principal of a small community school in the mid-coast.

Let me explain what small community schools are. They are places where, like Cheers, everyone knows your name. The relationship among the students, staff, superintendent, school committee, special ed. director and parents allows us to solve small issues before they become big problems requiring expensive litigation. We save money because we are accessible. Because of that close relationship, the community has chosen to support the needs of our school by voting for school budgets, including last year's which was well above the EPS level.

The Governor's proposal and those like it treat communities as though they need to be punished for supporting their schools. Most of the proposals have a negative tone - the message being that towns are not capable of making educational decisions for themselves. Therefore, the decision-making process must be legislated. In most of the proposals, individual towns will not have the right to provide more than the minimum in the EPS formula for their children unless thousands of people miles away also vote for it.

However, the language and intent of LR 1415 seem to recognize that we value our small towns and schools, but that we could all use some support in saving money on the things that don't directly affect kids; like fuel bids and payroll. We can consolidate some of those things and should, but not at the expense of local involvement and the personal relationship. There still needs to be someone in central office with the time and inclination to talk to a parent or staff member with a problem. And, the experience shouldn't resemble a call that's been routed to customer service in India!

Maine has a few unique things to offer folks. We have a beautiful and safe state. We have wonderful small towns where people can become involved and make a difference. The other thing Maine has to offer (or had) is quality public education.

We worry that we lose our brightest and best graduates to high paying jobs out of state. However, I know some 30-somethings who did very well with their Maine k-12 public educations, have worked in great jobs out of state for the past few years, and now want to come home. They want to return because they have children for whom they want to provide the quality of life they grew up with – including a quality education in a small community setting. And, many of them don't need already existing Maine jobs because they can bring their businesses or professions with them or they can telecommute. These aren't strangers, **these are Mainers** who want their children to have what they had and are willing to pay for it because they can.

We need to market Maine to these young professionals who would choose this as the best place to raise a family and live a quality life.

Before you all jump on the legislated consolidation band wagon, answer in your own minds the question a mom in my town asked the other night, ***"If this is a disaster, who will take responsibility for it and give us back what we had?"***

PLEASE, think long and hard before you mess with one of Maine's greatest assets – its small community schools!

Thank you,

Joanne Krawic

389 Duck Puddle Rd.

Nobleboro, ME

563-8829

Members of the Education and Appropriations Committees
Augusta, Maine

February 5, 2007

Re: Education Reform Hearings

Dear Committee members,

I would like to take this opportunity to point out to you an important issue that is being overlooked in the debate regarding education reform. School districts have been criticized for spending beyond the EPS funding guidelines. However, there is a major flaw in the EPS guiding personnel ratios, at the elementary and middle school levels, making it impossible to respect the requirements of the Maine Learning Results and remain within the EPS funding guidelines. Classroom and Special Subject teachers are combined in the same category with a ratio of 1-17 for elementary and 1-16 for middle level. Therefore, school districts that offer Art, Music, Physical Education and Foreign Language as special subjects in elementary and middle schools are compelled to go beyond the guidelines to pay the salaries of these "Special Subject" teachers.

For example, in my district there are four K-8 schools, with a combined enrollment of 588 elementary and middle school students. Each of these schools needs at least 9 classroom teachers, for a total of 36 K-8 teachers. Our district also offers Art, Music, Physical Education and French to all K-8 students, as required by the Maine Learning Results. However, the funding formula would allow only 35 teachers for all subjects. Therefore, the "Special Subjects" would receive no funding, according to the current EPS guidelines.

This flaw in the EPS ratios came to my attention two years ago, when my school district was forced to cut the elementary French program from two teachers to one and a half teachers. As the full-time French teacher, this meant that my French teaching workload increased from two schools with K-8 French programs (approximately 260 students) to three schools (approximately 450 students). I testified before the Education Committee in Augusta on April 5, 2005, regarding the flawed EPS ratios. I also contacted Sen. Peter Mills and Rep. Tom Saviello, urging them to sponsor legislation to correct the problem. To my knowledge, no action has been taken to correct the EPS ratios, which means that the State of Maine will not be funding "Special Subjects".

I sincerely hope that it is not the intention of the legislature or the governor to force the elimination of these subjects from the elementary and middle schools of Maine. However, if the EPS ratios are not corrected, schools that use the EPS funding guidelines to develop their budgets will have to cut subjects that are not taught by regular classroom teachers, in spite of the requirements of the Maine Learning Results.

I urge you to take action to correct this problem, as soon as possible, no matter which education reform proposal finally emerges. The children of Maine need your assistance. Thank you for your understanding.

Carol Cupples

I'd like to begin by commending you all for trying to come up with a way to cut government spending here in the state of Maine. Most of us are well aware of the difficult and often-thankless task of so doing. We are here today to exercise our rights under the constitution, because we have many concerns about these proposals, which have recently come to our attention.

First, we have very little time to really understand the proposals in order to make a fair judgment on them. Nor do we have the time necessary to convey real finding to the general public thus taking away their ability to judge and vote fairly.

Secondly, how will this really impact our children? True the proposals state it would be in the best interest to them and the taxpayers. However, many taxpayers rely on their school boards to keep them abreast of things that will impact their children. In all fairness, if we do not have time to research the impact, how can we honestly speak in favor or against?

Furthermore, Some items in this proposal are very misleading. For example the number of towns in most of the proposed districts are over 15, yet we are told that the limit on board members is set at 15. Which towns will not be represented? I believe that perhaps the thought behind this point was that those areas with less population be combined under one representative on the board like any other government entity. Though great in theory, is this really where we want to go? I say no for the following reasons: The greater travel that would be incurred would be a hardship for most, that the ten dollar maximum compensation would not even begin to cover. So what would be lost, a great board member or the ability to represent all that they are assigned? Unlike government officials we board members do not have expense accounts or access to one. This brings me to my next point The Savings.

Will the proposed savings be a reality? Most representatives know how hard it is to be in touch with all of their constituents, especially those with larger geographical areas. And I wonder how they could feel ten dollars to be enough. For many years until recently told by law that we had to, we in our district did not take compensation. Most of us, however, if we had to go further than we do now would agree that we would have to ask for more, so where would be the savings. In all fairness if you ask someone to do more the compensation must be more. This stands to reason.

Our Children and their education matter to us, before we give up something that we have worked so hard to create we want to make sure that we gain something worth at least what we will lose.

Please take the time to get clear factual information out to the public so that they can vote knowledgeably.

I will close with a suggestion, perhaps set up a voluntary pilot program consisting of those towns that vote in favor and get some real solid facts, that would really expose all the problems and strengths, if any, of forming mega districts. These facts could then be presented to the public for continued consideration. If it proved favorable it would only put off this proposal for a year or two while seeing some savings from the volunteer district, On the other hand if it were not found favorable we would avoid the creation of a major disaster that could have far reaching implications that could take years to fix. Thank you for your time.

Members of the Appropriations and Education Committees:

My name is Robert Bouchard and I am Superintendent of Schools in School Union 74. School Union 74 includes the towns of Bremen, Bristol, Damariscotta, Newcastle, Nobleboro, and South Bristol.

As a Superintendent in a school union, I understand and support the need for consolidation and the development of regional support infrastructures. Moreover, I am eager to participate in the process with the help and support of the communities for which I work. Our school union had already formed a consolidation committee before these current bills were introduced. I have no doubt that some form of consolidation legislation will emerge from this session.

Importantly, my school union wants to continue and expand our efforts to consolidate, but we want to be able to do it in a thoughtful manner that provides for careful planning as well as the opportunity to find willing partners in our efforts. Any legislative action must recognize that education is a local function in this state and that good decisions regarding the future of our children's education can only be made with the participation of those affected. Heavy-handed top down legislation that provides for little planning and does not allow some measure of self-determination is bound to fail.

Moreover, any legislation passed on the basis of unrealistic cost savings projections will anger citizens and promote distrust when the promised savings do not materialize. Further, any legislation that essentially removes local control from our communities is to ignore our common history and erode community identity. During these past weeks my office has been preparing the several budgets for our towns in Union 74. Last week I began meetings with budget committees from our communities in preparation for March town meetings. During my meeting in Nobleboro with budget committee and selectmen to review the proposed budget for next year, I was reminded how much the citizens on these boards care for our schools and our children. Their questions to me about the school and the budget reflected the deep sense of responsibility they feel toward their school, the "local control" that is so deeply rooted in Maine. We must be mindful of this as we move ahead.

I recognize that legislators want to address this issue in this session and with something of substance. Your decisions in the coming weeks will have profound effects on our children and our communities for decades to come. In particular, I urge you not to pass legislation that skips those difficult and time consuming steps of local and regional planning, collaboration, and approval. Some of the proposals before you provide a simplified fast track of implementation, without regard to building the support that these efforts need to bring successful and sustained change. I remember H. L. Mencken's memorable statement that, "There is always an easy solution to every human problem--neat, plausible, and wrong." Let's not make that mistake here.

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.

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Maine School Administrative District No. 75

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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:

The Board of Directors of M.S.A.D. No. 75 feels strongly that Governor Baldacci's school district consolidation plan as presented is not in the best interest of Maine students. The Governor's consolidation plan focuses solely on dollars and not on student learning, does not pay close enough attention to the research on the effectiveness of consolidation, and does not use real data to support its conclusions.

If the claim is to be made that consolidation will positively affect learning, then there needs to be data to support it. Stephen Bowen's article in the January 25, 2007 edition of *The Maine View* points to studies that find consolidation to actually have a negative impact on student achievement and parent involvement. Many local educational initiatives have been undertaken to address needs specific to the communities and have considerable community support. These could potentially be lost to the creation of consistency in the name of economies. Clearly, before proceeding with any consolidation effort, **a cost/benefit analysis needs to be done to assess the positive and negative effects of any consolidation plan on programs and student learning.**

Local control is fundamental to town and school governance in Maine. A change to 26 large school districts would severely limit the voice of parents and taxpayers in educational decisions. There is much research to show that the greater the involvement of parents in the educational lives of their children, the better the student performance. From an economic perspective, the Brookings Institute report finds that local governance structures in Maine spend dollars prudently. Currently Maine's school union structure preserves local control while consolidating administrative services. While this may not be the best model to resolve the tension between economic efficiencies and local control, it provides an example on which to build. **Consolidation planning should look at current Maine educational structures that have emerged to satisfy the tension between local control and administrative efficiencies.**

The Governor's proposal for consolidation derives its savings from reduction in subsidy to SAUs and not from data that looks at cost savings from economies of scale. The mere reduction of subsidy does not insure property tax savings. In fact, it could have the opposite effect of requiring an increase in property tax in order to provide essential programs and services. **Any savings claimed to accompany consolidation need to be derived from data on actual costs of operation, not on untested assumptions or the mere reduction of subsidy.**

Maine school districts are already realizing economies of scale. *A Case of Cooperation* describes current efforts in collaboration and consolidation. The Legislature needs to look closely at these efforts and their challenges, and not rely on anecdotal information. **Any consolidation plan needs to be informed by actual Maine efforts at economies of scale and efficiency.**

The Governor's plan takes dollars away from instruction by raising the secondary student/teacher ratio and transfers the dollars to laptops for high school students. Schools may not be in a position to increase those ratios because of their particular demographics or the federal "highly qualified teacher" expectations or classroom space or curriculum needs. If unable to make changes, the dollars will have to be raised through local taxes. Similarly, the large infusion of laptops into school systems creates other costs for technology support and supplies. All of this adds greater complexity to the analysis of the value of consolidation. **Any consolidation plan should be considered separate and distinct from proposed changes in the EPS formula. Proposed changes to EPS need to be considered on their own merits.**

The Governor's plan does not consider the effect that consolidation will have on the availability of federal dollars. Once a district population rises to the level of 20,000 residents or above, the formula for determining the disadvantaged population changes from the free and reduced lunch percentage to the state census. The State census percentage is in many cases much smaller than local free and reduced lunch participants, which would cause systems to lose federal dollars. **Before any consolidation plan goes forward, the State needs to know what effect it would have on access to Federal funds.**

We have learned from the current reality that different sizes of governance structures present different variables of efficiency. As the *Education Service District* article in *The Maine View* points out, "District consolidation, in and of itself, does not guarantee lower costs," and points to the conditions where savings are gained and lost as related to district size. Consolidation into 26 regions preserves a high degree of size difference. **Consolidation should strive to create regions of similar size so as to maximize efficiencies.** The Brookings Institute report and the State Board's Select Panel report both recognize the studies that have shown the best results.

Legislative proposals before you offer alternatives to the Governor's proposal that address the above-mentioned issues around parent involvement and local control, while incentivizing cooperation and collaboration of administrative efficiencies. The Education Service District model is one such idea, found in Peter Mills' proposal and articulated in *The Maine View*. As the percentage of households with school-aged children continues to shrink in Maine, it is critical that parents continue to have a substantial voice in all matters related to their children's education.

February 5, 2007

J. Michael Wilhelm, Ed. D., Superintendent of Schools

Testimony introducing LD #370

Resolve, To Reduce the Number of School Administrative Units and Gain Administrative Efficiencies

Good morning, I am Karl Turner of Senate District #11 which is comprised of seven communities in Cumberland County: Chebeague Island, Cumberland, Falmouth, Gray, Long Island, North Yarmouth, and Yarmouth. I am pleased to offer LD #370 for your consideration.

This legislation creates a committee of eleven members comprised of two former legislators, eight former members of the education community including teachers, principals, superintendents all with rural and suburban experience as well as a former Commissioner of Education and a former State Board of Education member. The eleventh member, who would chair the committee, would be a former CEO of a publicly traded company headquartered in Maine.

The committee is charged to develop a consolidated school administration plan working with the following parameters:

- A. All SAUs would be abolished on the effective date of this resolve. This would include CSDs, Career and Technical Regions, Municipal School Units, SADs, School Unions, special school districts, union schools, and any other municipal or quasi municipality responsible for operating schools. The plan does NOT displace teachers or students and does not close any schools.
- B. The plan must consolidate administrative functions, duties, and personnel. The plan must provide and the committee shall determine boundaries for new school administrative units.
 1. The average SAU must be in the range of 2000 – 2200 students
 2. Each SAU must either be a municipal school district or a new SAD.
- C. Each SAU must have a school board of up to nine members. The committee shall determine boundaries for school board seats based on population so that school boards provide proportional representation.
- D. The committee's plan shall include a statewide business entity and regional business entities to further the consolidation of administrative functions. The statewide entity would provide services and perform functions such as, but not limited to, payroll. Regional entities, which may be established using the career and technical education regions in existence, would provide services and perform functions on a regional basis such as, but not limited to, purchasing, transportation scheduling and transportation maintenance.

E. The plan to create SAUs must consider transportation patterns; physical proximity and ease of physical connectivity; and increased academic opportunity.

The committee shall submit its plan along with any necessary implementing legislation to Legislature by Dec 3, 2007. Plan implementation would be completed by June 30, 2008. Elections for the new school boards created by the committee would be held on a Statewide election held in June 2008.

Debt incurred by a SAU that exists the day the plan takes effect remains with the municipalities that incurred the debt.

Schools that absorbed into new SAU structures may create school advisory committees to provide advice and counsel to school principals.

Lastly, it is the intent that the plan submitted by the committee become law in substantially the same form as it is submitted.

Thank you.

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 COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND CULTURAL AFFAIRS AND APPROPRIATIONS AND FINANCIAL AFFAIRS, MY NAME IS MICHAEL CORMIER AND I AM CHAIR OF THE FUNDING COMMITTEE OF THE MAINE SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS ASSOCIATION (MSSA) AND SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS IN MSAD #9. I AM HERE TODAY REPRESENTING THE FUNDING COMMITTEE OF MSSA.

WE WISH TO GO ON RECORD OPPOSING GOVERNOR BALDACCI'S CONSOLIDATION PLAN AS CONTAINED IN THE DRAFT BUDGET DOCUMENT. OUR COMMITTEE FINDS THAT SPECIFIC DETAILS HAVE NOT BEEN FLESHED OUT REGARDING THE ACTUAL SAVINGS THAT CAN BE EXPECTED.

IN FACT, THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION HAS DONE NO MODELING TO SHOW THE IMPACT OF REGIONALIZATION ON THE EDUCATION COSTS IN THE PROPOSED REGIONS.

AN EXAMPLE OF THE KIND OF CALCULATION THAT CONCERNS US IS:

THE \$186 PER PUPIL ALLOCATION PROPOSED FOR SYSTEM ADMINISTRATION AT THE REGIONAL LEVEL WAS CALCULATED BY TAKING THE 2006 STATE AVERAGE PER PUPIL SYSTEM ADMINISTRATION EXPENDITURES OF \$372 AND DIVIDING IT IN HALF.

WHY DIVIDE IT IN HALF? ACCORDING TO THE DEPARTMENT THIS PROCESS WAS USED BECAUSE IT RESULTED IN A NUMBER THAT WAS REASONABLY CLOSE TO THE NATIONAL AVERAGE COST FOR SCHOOL SYSTEM ADMINISTRATION.

THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION THEN MULTIPLIED THE \$186 FIGURE BY 3.2% FOR INFLATION TO ESTABLISH AN ADJUSTED FIGURE OF \$204 FOR REGIONS WITH 2500+ STUDENTS IN 2009.

THE \$186 PER PUPIL ALLOCATION WAS INCREASED BY ONE THIRD (1/3) TO \$248 FOR REGIONAL SYSTEMS WITH FEWER THAN 2500 STUDENTS. THIS FIGURE WAS INCREASED BY 3.2% TO \$272 FOR 2009. WHEN ASKED HOW THEY DECIDED THAT \$248 WAS THE RIGHT NUMBER FOR SMALLER SYSTEMS THE FUNDING COMMITTEE WAS TOLD THAT IT WAS AN "ARBITRARY MINIMUM" THAT MIGHT BE NEEDED IN THE SMALLER REGIONS.

OTHER ISSUES THAT CONCERN US ARE:

THE DEPARTMENT HAS NOT DEVELOPED A MODEL OR TEMPLATE FOR DETERMINING THE ACTUAL STAFF THAT WILL BE REQUIRED TO ADMINISTER THE VARIOUS REGIONS.

THE DEPARTMENT'S CALCULATIONS HAVE NOT TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT CURRENT OBLIGATIONS OF EXISTING SCHOOL UNITS THAT WILL BE ASSIGNED TO THE NEW REGIONS (E.G. MULTI-YEAR CONTRACTS, LOCAL DEBT SERVICE).

THERE HAS BEEN NO CONSIDERATION GIVEN TO THE SEVERANCE AND UNEMPLOYMENT COSTS THAT WILL BE INCURRED BY LAYING OFF EXISTING SCHOOL PERSONNEL.

THE DEPARTMENT HAS NOT CALCULATED THE COSTS THAT WILL BE INCURRED TO MERGE ALL THE COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AGREEMENTS WITHIN THE REGIONS.

THE INCREASE IN TEACHER/STUDENT RATIOS REPRESENTS A 6% DECREASE IN STATE SUPPORT OF TEACHERS AT THE MIDDLE SCHOOL LEVEL AND A 12% DECREASE IN STATE SUPPORT OF TEACHERS AT THE HIGH SCHOOL LEVEL. THIS REPRESENTS A SIGNIFICANT TAX SHIFT FROM THE STATE TO THE LOCAL LEVEL WHICH WILL REQUIRE INCREASED PROPERTY TAXES TO AVOID TEACHER LAYOFFS.

THERE CONTINUE TO BE NUMEROUS QUESTIONS REGARDING THE HANDLING OF EXISTING LOCAL ONLY DEBT AND LEASE PURCHASE OBLIGATIONS WITHIN CURRENT SCHOOL SYSTEMS.

THE GOVERNOR'S PLAN IS NOT A REAL SOLUTION TO MAINE'S HIGH PROPERTY TAXES.

HAVING SHARED THESE CONCERNS WITH YOU, THE FUNDING COMMITTEE WANTS YOU TO KNOW THAT WE ARE NOT OPPOSED TO THOUGHTFUL CONSOLIDATION AND REGIONAL EFFORTS, MANY OF WHICH ARE NOW IN PROGRESS THROUGH VOLUNTEER COLLABORATIONS AND PARTNERSHIPS. WE BELIEVE THAT BY BRINGING ALL PARTIES TO THE TABLE WE CAN ACCOMPLISH SAVINGS AND IMPROVED EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL CHILDREN IN MAINE.

THANK YOU

MICHAEL CORMIER
SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS
MSAD #9

Comments of Harvey Shue of Hampden Academy SAD 22

Good morning, my name is Harvey Shue. I am a junior from Hampden Academy which is part of SAD 22. I am here to provide you a youth opinion.

The proposed consolidation plan is an extreme act which will do two things. One, save money, which is the driving force behind the plan, and two, create school boards disconnected further from their community.

I read Susan Gendron's Op-ed piece in the Bangor Daily News. In the piece she states that the proposed plan will 'ensure significantly greater local participation and engagement, guaranteeing every parent, teacher, and community member a voice in how their schools are governed.'

How can this be when you have fewer representatives serving more people?

If the proposed plan were to go through, Maine would go from having 296 school districts to 26 and 152 superintendents to 26. This is supposed to save an estimated \$250 million over 3 years.

How will the megadistricts be arranged? My current school board represents 2,200 students in 3 communities. If the plan goes through the Bangor Regional District would have 1 board serving 16,000 students in 33 communities. Under the LSRS Initiative, people living in other regions may have a board and a superintendent to represent less than 4,000 students. Shouldn't there be a balance there?

A couple weeks ago a few seniors from my high school stood up in front of my school board to ask if they could have an outdoor graduation. The senior class agreed to raise approximately \$2,500 while asking the board for around \$4,000. This proposal passed. I wonder if it would

have passed if the megadistricts were in place? First off, would there be enough time for a few students to speak out and be heard by the megadistrict board? The proposed Regional Districts would have to consider lots of different school's issues before student issues at their meetings. What if the new board of directors were from towns other than Hampden, Winterport, and Newburgh? Would they agree to help students at a school which they knew hardly anything about?

I believe that the way the plan is currently set up is too extreme. If the goal is to save money by consolidation then consolidate, however, do not knock the numbers down from 296 districts to 26 because that is far too few. Our legislature and the governor need to find a medium where the state of Maine will save a great deal of money without cutting down the numbers of districts and superintendents so drastically. Maybe 100 districts would do the trick? Please value reasonable involvement and accessibility of students and parents to their elected school board without the overriding desire to save money.

February 5, 2007

I am Bucket Davis, first selectman, representing the Town of East Machias. I thank the committee for the opportunity to speak today on this very important issue.

My purpose is not to discuss the particulars of the Governor's proposal, although I stand firmly against it. Instead, my objective is to highlight our success in East Machias where efficiencies in school governance and management have been achieved at the local level by municipal and school officials with participation from the local community. These efficiencies did not occur because of consolidation of administrative units and functions, but because of our withdrawal from a dysfunctional School Administrative Unit. It is my hope you will appreciate that the same efficiencies you and the Governor seek in school administration can be achieved at the local level, without top down direction from State government.

In March 2005 the Commissioner approved our withdrawal from SAD 77 and authorized us to form the East Machias Municipal School District. We were being asked to pay \$90,000 more per year than the actual cost of educating our town's kids. All past efforts to seek efficiencies within the district had met with resistance and failure. Cutting these long-standing ties with our neighboring towns did not come easily, but the vote in the end was 322 in favor, 22 against.

A quick overview of some highlights serves to make my point that there are other ways to achieve the efficiencies sought in the current debate:

- Our school budget in our first year of operation was less than what we would have paid had we stayed as part of the SAD. Despite negotiating higher salaries for teachers and support staff and expensive, but necessary program changes, our second year budget had no increases to local taxpayers because of education!
- We've achieved great efficiencies by combining some municipal and school functions. For example, insurance coverage for facilities and personnel has been combined. The maintenance supervisor's time (and salary costs) is shared between the municipality and the school. Several supervisory functions have been deleted or combined under fewer personnel.

- We share a superintendent's office and director of special education services with Union 102 under a cost share agreement. No additional administrative overhead was created.

We have increased educational opportunities at our town's school. We now offer new courses in Algebra, foreign language, and music. We've funded new instructional programs in reading and writing, and new textbooks for many grades. We've adopted a curriculum-mapping program that will provide accountability for course content. We are the first school in this area to adopt this program, but we will not be the last – several other schools have signed on.

In a nutshell, we have already consolidated services and functions locally, where it has made sense to do. There exists a close working relationship between town government and the school board, and between the school board, the community, and teachers and administration. Our school is growing in population and in the quality of services offered.

Our final mention of importance we place on local community involvement in education. Through local control, community members have taken a new interest in supporting our local school. We have a committee of local businessmen and parents who have been working tirelessly over the past year to design, acquire equipment, and build playgrounds for our lower elementary and middle school grades. The town voted at the annual town meeting to provide up to \$20,000 this year in matching funds for this playground. Businesses and local contractors have committed their time and services to making this happen. These sorts of activities and dedicated involvement on the part of the local community do not happen when there is no sense of ownership in the school or its mission.

In summary, the types of efficiencies sought by the Governor and the legislature can be achieved without the drastic measures called for in many of the plans put forth over the last several weeks. We've proven it in East Machias. There's no reason it can't work in other parts of rural Maine.

ELM STREET ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Superintendent of School
SCOTT K. PORTER

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Principal
TONY L. MAKER

Director of Special Services
MARY E. MAKER

Monday, February 5, 2007

Dear Members of the Education and Appropriations Committees,

My name is Tony Maker and I am the principal of the Elm Street School in East Machias. Elm Street is a pre-k through 8 school with an enrollment of 155. We are currently in the second year of being an independent municipal school, sharing administrative services with School Union 102. Previously Elm Street School was part of SAD 77, which no longer exists.

I have been in the field of education for 18 years and have been a principal for 7. I can honestly testify that the last 2 have been the highlight of my career. Teacher morale has been at an all time high, parent and community involvement have reached unprecedented levels, and most importantly, student learning has increased. All this has been accomplished without an increase in the local budget.

It is the opinion of the staff, parents, students, and myself, that the Governor's LSRS plan or any other plan that will strip the local control from Elm Street School and others like us is absolutely unacceptable. The ability to make local decisions concerning program additions such as foreign language, algebra, classroom music, and a pre-k program would be transferred to a 5-15 member board which would not and should not have the specific educational needs of East Machias children as their top priority. Any long-term initiatives that have been started and invested in would be put on hold or discontinued. Textbook decisions would leave the school level and be done on a much wider scale with less individual ownership. The process of creating of calendars to meet the specific needs of our own community would disappear.

One of the Governor's objectives is to save money at the administrative level while promising, **"classroom learning will go on without interruption or disruption through this process."** All teachers can testify that students and their learning are affected by changes in administration. Teachers will be placed under great pressure; programs and class schedules will change. Needs teachers have will have to pass through a 5-15 member school board in which representation from their town could range from 0-20%, and local school pride and morale will tumble. In addition, with the change in student to teacher ratio increasing to 17:1, smaller schools will face the possibility of losing teachers based on the decision of a school board in which 80% or more of the membership has no local ties to that school.

All through the Learning Results Implementation process, schools were told time and time again that decision-making at the school and local unit level was the most appropriate for the education of students. Why has that position now changed to a belief that decisions should be made, first by politicians in Augusta, and second by a non-local school board?

I have deliberately omitted any discussion of the increased responsibility of the principal with less available support from the superintendent. This is an obvious result and why the plan calls for a full time principal in every school. Does this mean that a school that already has a full time principal can now have an assistant? I am sure the answer is no.

The Elm Street School community has been fortunate to experience what two years of actual local control and decision-making is all about. This community does not want to return to a district board, and a much larger one, that will all but eliminate their power to direct the future of the Elm Street School.

I believe that consolidation of administrative services can be done without the elimination of local control. I urge you to reject any plan or proposal that establishes any governance of that nature.

Thank-you for this opportunity to share my views on this very important matter.

Sincerely,



Tony L. Maker

February 5, 2007

Donna Miller Damon
13 Fenderson Road
Chebeague Island ME 04017
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Good morning Senators and Representatives of the Education and Appropriation Committees. My name is Donna Miller Damon. I live on Chebeague Island in Casco Bay where my family settled in 1760. I am one of nine representatives elected to create the government for the soon to be Town of Chebeague Island, and I am here today representing that body.

While we appreciate the governor's courage to initiate a discussion to streamline Maine's educational administration to cut costs, we are concerned that the cookie cutter one size fits all approach does not always work and has unintended consequences.

About this time last year my neighbors and I were walking the halls of the State House explaining why we wanted to secede from the Town of Cumberland. Our story was simple. The local school district decided to send our fourth and fifth graders to the mainland without any discussion with islanders. I won't rehash this story, because many of you heard our saga and understood our underlying concern – we realized that the day would come when five people on the mainland would make a decision that would doom our island and our way of life forever. We did not have a voice. The legislature listened and more than a super majority agreed. It was clear that as one of Maine's last island communities, we were willing to do what was necessary to sustain our year-round community.

I'm back here again feeling as if I am a character in an O. Henry story! The people of Chebeague are in a situation wrought with irony! We are in the process of planning our July celebration and preparing to bond our significant debt. We are developing plans for our school

so that young families will want to stay on the island. We are creating a budget that is frugal and may in fact provide all of our services, pay our debt, and may possibly result in a tax reduction in year one - we are hoping!

But we are very worried. As currently proposed we would be part of the Greater Portland mega-district – the largest school district in Maine. Our 45 children would be insignificant specks in a 20,000-student district. The regional board would have to have 400 members for us to have one representative. It just won't work. If the directors of MSAD 51 wouldn't listen to us - and we knew them and they knew us—what understanding of unique island issues can we expect in the Greater Portland mega district? Even if you combined us with the Portland north suburbs we would still go from the frying pan into the fire.

What would work for us? We could share administrative services such as purchasing, payroll, professional development etc. - cooperating and collaborating wherever possible with like communities, because we want save money too, but we have worked too hard not to have control of our school. We need to do what is necessary to keep our school open. We need to keep our money on Chebeague, if we are to meet the financial obligations that were part of our secession bill that was approved by the last legislature. We need to make decisions at the local level if we are going to survive as a year-round island community.

Please communicate with us as you deliberate, so that we can avoid unintended consequences of best intentions as you craft the consolidation bill. Please know that the future of our island community is in your hands once again.

Hello! My name is Debbie Carver. I have a Master's Degree in Education and teach 6th, 7th, & 8th grade math and science at Jonesport Elementary School. Our school hosts grades K-8 and has approximately 125 students. It is truly a privilege for me to teach math and science to approximately 40 of these upper grade students each day.

--The day is highly structured, "every minute counting", so we can get through all the steps of our "hidden agenda" for the day. JES students know that expectations are set high and that positive attitudes are of "utmost importance". These kids come "ready to work". --In return, they need to know they are "valued" and each a truly unique part of a school family, because we, in actuality, spend more time together than they probably do with their own families during the school year...

--I believe that teaching is an art; --an art in which you first need to "touch the heart" in order "to trigger" the mind and soul to respond. Because of this, some of the most important part of my teaching doesn't come from my "Passports to Algebra & Geometry" text book, but it comes from compassion:--from truly listening, --from understanding, and --from offering a kind word.

Teaching in a small rural school offers many rewarding experiences that just cannot be duplicated in a larger school setting. Just for instance, here is an example of a typical start to my students' day as well as my own.

I get to school just as the 1st bus is rolling in. My colleague, Miss McDavid and I (whom seem to run on the same schedule) get out of our vehicles, "exchange Good Mornings", and head for the school. Automatically 2 sets of double doors "fling open" giving us "the red carpet treatment". Manning these doors are four 6th, 7th, and 8th grade boys with smiles on their faces. More "Good Mornings" are exchanged, As we enter, a 7th grade boy, about 4 feet tall, grab's my coffee along with my lunch bag, and another 7th grader takes my books from my arms. They are headed towards my desk, trying to "lighten my load".

Next, a 6th grade girl and her sister (I'd love to use names, but can't.) enter my already full room of 7th graders. As I get my "routine morning hug" from the younger sister, the older sister hauls out her "Passports to Algebra & Geometry" book and asks if I would help her on a couple of examples she had trouble with the night before. Within seconds, she's "all straightened out" and realizes it wasn't as hard as it had appeared.

Next, "SHAKE & BAKE" enters. He is a 6th grade boy who is appropriately nicknamed, as he has the sweetest little way of moving at his own pace. He has come in to finish his clay model of the cell which is waiting for him on the back shelf. He seems eager to begin.

Then, another 6th grade girl enters and approaches "SHAKE-N-BAKE" and I at my desk. She says, "These customary units in math are "killing me". Could you please help me with these. I say, "Sure," and we begin. It actually turned out to be a lot less "painless" than she had thought!!

Next enters --(and I feel his presence before he even comes in....) a 6 foot 4 inch 8th grade boy whom I think of in my mind as "The Gentle Giant". His extreme height and broad shoulders fill the doorway. Every morning I can expect his entrance, and "surely enough", this morning is no exception. "Mrs. Carver, are we going to have science today?" he asks. "Of course we are. Bring your laptop. You're going to need to take some notes on the Laws of Thermodynamics," I respond. He then asks, "Can I get my laptop so I can print you off the weather?" "You sure can. I'd really appreciate that!" I laughingly respond. Within two minutes, I have my daily weather forecast on my desk. "The Gentle Giant"

moves off to his "comfort spot" in the room "to hang out".

Next, an unexpected 8th grade girl comes in. I had just found out "through the grapevine" that her grandmother had passed away the night before. This was the same 8th grade girl whose dog had been run over earlier in the year. I'm thankful that I was semi-prepared for this meeting. --She talks, and I listen. There is no way "to help her hurt go away", but somehow she manages "to get her feelings out". This seems to "lighten her load" a little, and she goes back to her homeroom to get ready for the day.

Lastly, (& after this last student, I can begin teaching for the day, as it is almost 8:00 A.M.) --and I had been waiting for him, a 7th grade boy enters with a look of concern on his face. His parents were going to be away for the week, and he would be staying with some friends. This boy used to seem "really fragile". He seemed to be trying so hard "to fit in".... Some days he felt he did, and some days he was upset because he felt he didn't. This year has been a "milestone" in his life, because he is truly becoming a wonderful part of his 7th grade classroom. He is able to feel that "rewarding sensation" of truly fitting in. It illuminates his eyes, and his face "lights up". Peer acceptance is written all over him. --He ends our conversation by handing me his essay, a letter written to Governor Baldacci, responding to his plan to consolidate our school systems. Because of time constraints, my colleague, Marcia Mc David will read his letter.

I realize that my message today has been a little unusual. But you see, I work "in the trenches". I see the "reality of our kids every day lives" in the school system. Small is so much better, so much more "up close" and "personal".--Our kids aren't a number, they actually have a name...

February 5, 2007

Testimony from Marie Laverriere-Boucher of Biddeford, Maine
Before the Joint Standing Committees of the 123rd Legislature

All the School District Consolidation Bills

Good morning Senators Bowman and Rotundo and Representatives Norton and Fisher and members of the Appropriation and Financial Affairs and Education and Cultural Affairs Joint Committees.

I am in opposition ~~of these bills as written. The one I am most aware~~
of is the Governors bill and it's passage as is would be detrimental to
Maine's children. Because of its implication with:

- Class sizes being too large for appropriate learning.
- Counting all support staff as instructional staff therefore limiting support services.
- Having 18,000 students in the district that I work in and expecting to hire one superintendent to do the job—this is part of the Governor's proposed savings. Who would want to do this work for the same pay? It is already difficult to find good Superintendents
- Forcing students to travel very far to school when closing those schools where attendance is not as high as the Governor proposes.
- Numerous other concerns where our children will suffer in the long run.

I work in a public high school in York County as a Licensed Clinical Social Worker. The district I work in has already consolidated several years ago. There are 6 towns in MSAD #57. These 6 towns cover hundreds of miles and their population is low. I understand that the Governor did researched in large cities when creating this bill and I want to make the point one more time that Maine is not Boston, or New York. We have a low population and a lot territory. Our taxes come from fewer people and we have more infrastructure to maintain because of the size of our State. Please vote against this bill.

We do need to find tax saving measures but this is not the place. I agree that some small districts may benefit by joining others to cut overhead costs but to make this State-wide-sweep consolidation without working with the leaders of the communities is just plain bad leadership from the Governor and the Legislature. Thank you,

Marie Laverriere-Boucher

**LOCAL SCHOOLS, REGIONAL SUPPORT INITIATIVE
FEBRUARY 5, 2007**

KEY CONCERNS:

- **DISTRICTS CREATED WITHOUT DESIGNATED SCHOOL BOUNDARIES.**
- **EVEN DISTRIBUTION OF THE STUDENT POPULATION WITHIN THE PURPOSED DISTRICTS. (THE CLOSING OF SMALL SCHOOLS)**
- **INFLATED DISTRICT ADMINISTRATIVE BUREAUCRACY - OVER TIME.**
- **DISTRICTS TEACHERS' CONTRACTS BASED ON SENORITY CAUSING "POSITION BUMPING" (MORALE CONCERNS).**
- **UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES (STUDENT OWNERSHIP, NEGATIVE SCHOOL/COMMUNITY CLIMATE, LESS PARENT PARTICIPATION, ETC.)**
- **EQUAL REPRESENTATION BY ALL SCHOOLS WITHIN THE NEW DISTRICTS.**
- **LONG BUS RIDES.**
- **INCREASED ANONYMITY.**
- **LOWER PARTICIPATION IN ATHLETIC AND OTHER EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES BY STUDENTS, PARENTS, AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS.**
- **LOSS OF COMMUNITY IDENTITY AND ATTACHMENT.**



Robert Beal
P.O. Box 171
Beals, ME 04611
Telephone: 207-497-5522

Good morning committee members, I am Robert Beal from Beals Island, a retired educator. I have served as chief negotiator for the Moose-A-Bec Teachers' Association and Assistant Principal at Jonesport Elementary School. I am opposed to the Governor's Consolidation Plan.

What is Maine's most valuable resource? I believe it is our children. They should not be penalized to save money.

I want to talk about a common sense approach not one of projected numbers. I understand the Governor's concern about administration costs. I remember teachers getting raises of a few hundred dollars and administration getting thousands. Mega Districts will not solve administration costs. One superintendent can not supervise a Mega District and will need assistants who will receive salaries. Each superintendent will need more clerical help.

In the Mega District smaller towns will lose representation. The governor says he will not close schools. Actually, he will not directly close small schools, but the Mega Boards will vote to close schools as cost saving measures. Smaller towns will not have a vote. This is taxation without representation. Isn't it ironic this is just what caused a new nation to be born on this continent at little over 200 years ago? Small towns are going to be taxed to fund schools they have no voice in the curriculum, operation, and hiring.

The Governor's Plan will cause a loss of identity. Beals and Jonesport will have no schools like many other towns. People are proud of their schools and most are willing to pay to keep them. Many volunteer to help. Smaller schools have smaller teacher student ratios making better learning opportunities and more involvement.

Employment will be a factor. Mega Districts will bring lay-offs of some superintendents,

many principals, teachers, secretaries, and custodians. This will be a financial blow to communities, especially those without industry.

Comprehensive agreements will be void as they are negotiated with local school boards and will not be binding making seniority clauses meaningless resulting in the loss of veteran teachers.

Bigger is not always better. I believe the projected teacher student ratio of 1 to 17 will not exist. I see possibly a ratio of 1 to 34. If so, this will be a poor learning atmosphere. Bigger schools will offer more activities, but the larger numbers mean less involvement for most.

Travel over longer distances to get students to school is not a welcome situation. Jonesport and Beals students will have to be bused many miles. This is not good for small children or older. High school students will use their own vehicles traveling a round trip of 42 miles to Machias. I did this for 4 years as a college student. I can tell you I am lucky to be alive. I came so close to being in terrible accidents. On Mason's Bay Road to Jonesboro you could basically have a tombstone to mark every mile.

What is best for our children should be our main concern. Money should not be the most important issue. I can't believe the legislature will sacrifice our children for so - called projected savings. Let us not balance the budget on the backs of our school children.

MAINE COALITION FOR EXCELLENCE
IN EDUCATION



January 30, 2007

Dear Members of the 123rd Maine Legislature:

On January 18, 2007 several members of the Maine Coalition for Excellence in Education Board of Directors met to analyze and synthesize numerous **proposals for regionalizing school districts**. Like the Coalition itself, the working group was comprised of both **experienced business and education administration leaders**.

There was consensus in the group that regional consolidation of school districts is absolutely necessary. Administering and maintaining 286 districts is simply unsustainable given the economic environment in Maine. Educational resources need to be used in a more effective way that produces better student learning.

Fortunately, there seems to be a great deal of energy and political will to tackle the issue as evidenced by the number of regionalization proposals going before the Legislature. Including Governor Baldacci's proposal, we are aware of eight different proposals. We applaud the Governor and the others for proposing bold action on such an emotional issue but are concerned that political passion will rule and we may end up with no viable plan for improving student performance.

The emerging conversations center on reducing taxes through district regionalization which the Coalition supports. However, we propose that the **principal objective of any regional consolidation plan should be improved student performance**. We support the call for a more efficient use of resources and effective governance for Maine schools insofar as the decisions are based on both the **educational impact and economics**. Fewer, better structured and resourced districts will improve coordination, communication and result in a more defined common purpose that will improve learning for all students.

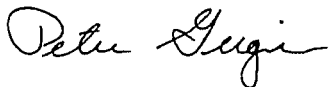
The tremendous energy around this subject provides **an opportunity for the 123rd Legislature** to take the **best thinking** of all the proposals, **meld them** into a comprehensive and workable plan that makes both **educational and economic sense**. The Maine Coalition for Excellence in Education believes that such a plan is achievable and stands ready to assist in both the design and implementation. As we said to you last year — *Maine students can't wait*. Their need for improved education results is now as they undertake further schooling or enter the workforce.

We urge you to evaluate the proposals and define your own plan through the lens of these guiding principles – failure to meet each criterion would deem the proposal flawed and not appropriate for Maine:

1. Ensures the best educational results for Maine students – including full implementation of Maine’s Learning Results.
2. Requires the efficient use of Maine’s limited resources in order to achieve #1.
3. Ensures accountability for student achievement and savings with specific targets & consequences for not meeting the targets.
4. Assures EQUITY for all Maine students.
5. Mandates district consolidation and with a rational strategy to guide the process.
6. Provides the necessary resources to support the consolidation process across the state.
7. Ensures appropriate balance between State and Local authority to produce improved results for all Maine students.
8. Assures best practices employed at all levels in all components of the new school district organizations.

We strongly believe a well designed and implemented plan for consolidation of administration can provide more effective educational leadership and more productive use of public dollars for education. The plan will be a wise investment in Maine's citizens and its economic future.

Best regards,



Peter Geiger,
MCEE Chair

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?

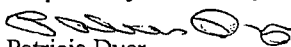
Central Office employees are already highly skilled. What will they train for since the majority of Maine jobs are low paying, often without health insurance or accompanied by wages too low to allow employees to purchase insurance? The reality in Maine is that working families do live in homeless shelters.

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
84 Seavey Street
Westbrook, ME 04092

Testimony on the Governor's Consolidation Proposal
Presented by Kristin Malin, Georgetown School Committee
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 Kristin Malin, and I am here today as a member of the Georgetown School Committee.

As a school board member elected by the residents of my local community to ensure compliance with state and federal statute in our local public schools and to advocate on behalf of our community's children for adequate funding for our schools, I request first and foremost that school board members and their superintendents be involved in any effort to restructure education in the State of Maine. We are the closest elected officials to the children, and we have to implement any plan that the legislature enacts. You have been elected by the same local residents to represent all of us, including school board members and our children.

The Governor's proposal and the process undergone to plan it are deeply flawed, adversarial, and undemocratic. His plan should NOT be fixed; it is un-fixable. It relies on prescription, specious comparison of Maine with other states, and suspect and mutable figures for projected savings.

Any plan developed should involve all three principles of collaboration, regionalization, and consolidation.

Any plan should be developed locally/regionally as a planning group, creating more buy-in, and it should happen over time.

Currently, there are numerous collaboratives working toward efficient delivery of services, and several local districts have begun the discussions to create regional districts. In my own district, Union 47 and Bath have worked for the past nine months on a creative regional governance solution that meets the specific needs of our local district. We were told by the Department of Education on December 12, 2006, that our model would be used as a model for the state. We were taken by surprise with the Governor's plan and are wondering if we should continue our efforts.

Local control is more than deciding when or where to hold school dances or lunchroom decisions; local control is having voting input into budget decisions and school policy, such as expanding the laptop program into high schools or cutting programs. Local control is having a vote for the educational destiny of our children.

I urge the legislature to delay the 55% obligation of the state in funding education and expand the hotel tax in order to give the state the TIME necessary to have a more thoughtful process on school consolidation. The legislative timeline of March 15th is too fast for something as important as the education of our children; other people's children; my own children.

Together, if we are ALL involved, we can develop a creative plan for school consolidation which takes into account local issues, is flexible, and ensures high quality education.

Submitted by:

Kristin Malin, President-Elect, Maine School Boards Association

Georgetown School Committee and School Union 47 Joint School Board

**TESTIMONY
OF
REBECCA WYKE, COMMISSIONER
DEPARTMENT OF ADMINISTRATIVE & FINANCIAL SERVICES**

Before the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs
And the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs

Hearing Date: February 5, 2007

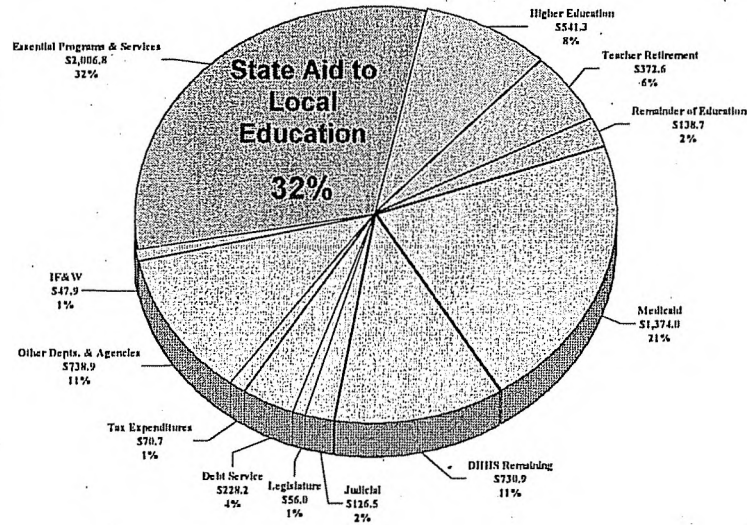
“An Act Making Unified Appropriations and Allocations for the Expenditures of State Government, General Fund and Other Funds, and Changing Certain Provisions of the Law Necessary to the Proper Operations of State Government for the Fiscal Years Ending June 30, 2008 and June 30, 2009.”

Senators Rotundo and Bowman, Representatives Fischer and Norton, and Members of the Joint Standing Committees on Appropriations and Financial Affairs and Education and Cultural Affairs, my name is Rebecca Wyke and I am the Commissioner of the Department of Administrative and Financial Services. I am here today to present testimony in support of **Part MM** of the Biennial Budget Document.

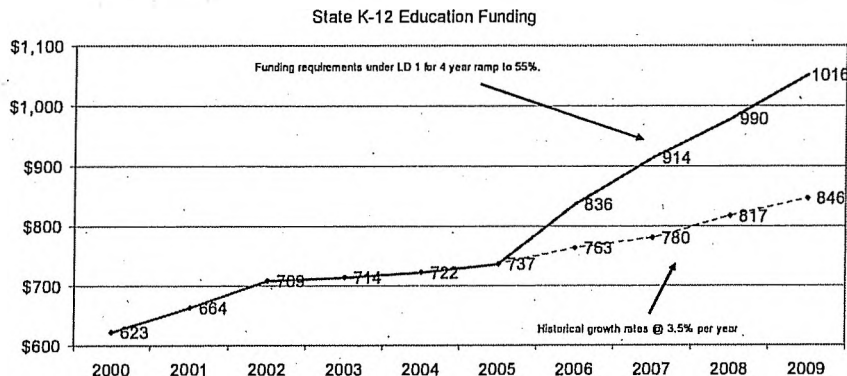
The Governor’s Local Schools, Regional Support initiative included in Part MM of the FY08/09 Biennial Budget incorporates the principles outlined in the recently released Brookings Report entitled, “Charting Maine’s Future.” The plan effectively streamlines administration, reinvesting scarce resources into our classrooms to enhance education for all Maine children.

State Aid to Local Education represents the single largest expenditure in the State’s General Fund Budget. Two billion dollars over the next two years, or 32% of State spending.

FY 08 - 09 Total General Fund Appropriations



It is the largest contributor to the “crowd out” effect outlined in the Brookings Report, reducing the availability of resources for other key functions of State government including: public safety and emergency management; natural resources and environmental protection; economic and tax relief programs; and the Legislative and Judicial branches of government. In the five years leading up to 2005 State aid to local education was increasing at an average rate of 3.5%. Since 2005, the pace has been dramatically accelerated to move the State’s share of local education to 55%. To reach this goal, the State would need to spend an additional \$800 million over four years.



Source: Maine Department of Education

The promise of the citizen initiated legislation requiring an increase in the State's share of local education was a corresponding relief in the burden borne by the local property tax. Yet, 81% of School Administrative Units exceeded their growth limits for the 2006-2007 school year. Every other level of government in Maine, the state, the counties and the municipalities, managed expenses under their respective spending caps. But local education expenditures continued to increase, even as student enrollments continued to decline.

The Local Schools, Regional Support initiative achieves significant and real savings in two ways. First, honoring the commitment for 55% state funding of approved education costs by July 1, 2008, results in \$178 million more for local education over the next biennium. Those funds will be available to ease the pressure on the local property tax. Second, restructuring central office administration will achieve \$241 million of State and local savings in the first three years of implementation.

The State is not asking the central office administration of local school systems to do something which it is not willing to do itself. State government was the first of Maine's governments to adopt a spending cap back in 2003. Although the provisions of LD 1 permitted the State to consider spending for aid to local education outside of the cap during the four year ramp-up to 55%, the LD 1 Progress Report for 2006 demonstrates that State spending even with the increase to local education remained squarely under its cap. In fact, if spending on local education were removed, remaining General Fund programs actually experienced negative growth during FY06.

General Fund Spending without Aid to Local Schools		
2005	\$2,049,936,851	
2006	\$2,035,762,647	-0.69%

The State reduced non-K through 12 spending by over \$100 million in the FY06/07 biennium in order to accommodate the increased spending for aid to local education. One year ago, State government successfully centralized its core administrative functions: information technology, human resources, payroll, accounting and financial services and saved \$11 million across State government. As in the proposal before you today, objections were raised -- mostly by the administrators themselves -- but the initiative was implemented and it is working. The dual goals of cost savings and improved accountability have also been achieved.

The FY 08/09 Biennial Budget includes further reductions of over \$100 million. In addition to the Local Schools, Regional Support initiative, the Budget further streamlines the administration of State government by:

- o Merging the Department of Professional and Financial Regulation with the Department of Economic and Community Development to create a new Department of Commerce – focused on the needs of business in Maine;
- o Merging the Atlantic Salmon Commission into the Department of Marine Resources to enhance the management and restoration of the Atlantic Salmon;

- Merging the Bureau of Employee Relations into the Bureau of Human Resources to provide more consistent application of HR policy across state government;
- Closing 3 satellite Maine Revenue Service offices moving those functions in-house where they can be performed with fewer staff and less resources;
- Reducing the number of offices in the Department of Human Services to enhance service and increase accountability;
- Transitioning the management of MaineCare to an outside fiscal agent – increasing accountability and reducing the workforce by 100 positions; and
- Implementing managed care for behavioral health services; establishing standardized rates; and expanding clinical management of MaineCare members to all adults.

Overall, the proposed reductions for State government administration included in FY08/09 Biennial Budget: reduces the number of cabinet-level departments by one; reduces the number of “high level” positions by eight saving \$1.6 million; and combines other offices and bureaus to create efficiencies and reduce costs creating a net reduction of 57 positions and bringing the total number of position reductions since 2002 to 669.

The current level of spending on the General Fund is unsustainable. We must harness efficiencies in all General Fund programs in order to bring that spending in line with resources. Curbing spending in the programs which State government directly administers is occurring, but it is not enough. We must address the major cost drivers, including aid to local education.

Testimony of Senator Elizabeth Mitchell
February 5, 2007

LD 464 AN ACT TO REFORM PUBLIC EDUCATION BY
ENCOURAGING REGIONAL APPROACHES

Joint Select Committees on Education and Cultural Affairs and
Appropriations and Financial Affairs

Senator Bowman, Senator Rotondo, Representative Norton,
Representative Fisher, and distinguished committee members:

I am Senator Elizabeth Mitchell, representing District 24:
Augusta, Union 52 (Vassalboro and China) and SAD 47 (Oakland
and Sidney). My district is a model of diverse school governance
that successfully educates thousands of students.

Yet I proudly present to you on behalf of the Maine
Children's Alliance a proposal for change in how we organize the
delivery of education in Maine. The Maine Children's Alliance
has earned a stellar reputation for data based decision making
concerning the welfare of our children. It's annual publication
KID'S COUNT sets benchmarks for measuring progress made by
Maine toward these goals. The Alliance describes itself as a strong,

powerful voice to improve the lives of children, youth, and families. In that capacity, they propose legislation to improve children's education.

The Alliance proposal focuses on the improvement of education by encouraging regional alliances to better utilize scarce resources. The Alliance produced a comprehensive report in 2006, A CASE FOR COOPERATION, in response to Maine's projected decline in enrollment of 23,000 students over the next five years. The study found that while Maine's school costs are well above the national average, teacher salaries are far below. Some Maine schools are expensive to administer, especially given the burden of state and federal regulations. The need to reallocate money to the classroom and to teachers demands immediate action in light of our statewide test scores and in light of the demand for tax relief embodied in two intense referendum debates on tax caps.

The bill creates 26 Regional School Planning Alliances based on existing vocational boundaries. These alliances must develop a plan for Cooperatives, non profit corporations that provide services

for its members. The Western Maine Educational Cooperative is an excellent model for this concept as it works with 11 school districts to share purchasing as well as programming.

The Planning Alliances can also propose Regional School Districts, a new form of governance for school cooperation. These new districts share a single superintendent, budget, and school board. These districts will offer choice among all the schools in the district.

The proposed planning alliances begin with elected members in November of 2007. They will be dissolved in 18 months. The state must provide funding and technical assistance so that their work can be accomplished.

Another incentive for cooperation among school districts is the creation of a new Regional Cooperation Construction Program. Multi-district proposals will receive a streamlined application process if they can show at least a 10% savings over current operating costs

This proposal also requires a statewide school calendar, the naming of SAD's, and setting educational standards for all municipal admissions or withdrawals from a regional district.

Our children cannot wait any longer for us to muster the political will to change our current inefficient system. They need us to reinvest in them. Our tax payers will not wait either. We have an opportunity to make the most fundamental change in Maine's educational system in 50 years. Working together, we can craft a plan to respect local involvement, leaner administration, better education, and a reduced tax burden.

Local Schools, Local Decisions, and Local Support

by George Crawford

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Harrington, Maine 04643

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crawford@prexar.com

To the members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee of the Maine Legislature and the Appropriations Committee, we are here today to discuss the future of the Governance of Maine Schools and I would like to offer my feelings, opinions, and concerns on this issue.

I am a Title I Teacher and the Technology Coordinator at the Jonesboro Elementary School where I have taught for 17 years. We are a small school of 60 students in grades K-8 in Washington County. Jonesboro's population is 580.

Of the many proposals in front of us today for the regionalization of school governance, many people of the smaller towns and communities of Maine with and without schools feel threatened. For many communities, the threat of the closure of their school and little or no voice in the proposed governance of the megadistricts that come under these plans has caused people to become alarmed.

Jonesboro is currently a part of School Union 102. The School Union model is where each town has a separate school committee and share a Superintendent of Schools, is targeted for elimination under many of these plans. The benefits of the School Union model are many. Local towns have access to their local school committee and also have control of their schools. Issues can be dealt with locally and effectively preventing the fighting of a larger governance structure such as an SAD or regional board. I believe them to be cost effective.

Under the Governor's Plan and several others on the table, small towns would lose their control to the regional board. They are not guaranteed seats on the regional board because of the election of these seats whether they are "at large seats" or combining two or more towns into "wards". This is a step backwards from what we

currently have and is "taxation without representation," as stated by the patriots of long ago.

Another famous quote says, "I may not agree with what you say, but I will defend with my life your RIGHT to say it." Small towns feel that our rights are being taken away from our local communities and they will begin to die. After consolidation of administration, small schools would be closed in the name of synergy, saving money, or whatever happens to be the new buzzword or phrases where everyone is a winner and no one is a loser.

The proposed Parent Advisory Councils for schools are powerless and can only recommend and influence decisions, and not make them.

Small schools are struggling to survive, thrive, and innovate but they are. Beals Elementary has raised money for books for their schools. Jonesboro Elementary does well on MEAs, has strong academics, a great music program, an excellent athletics program, a robotics program, and a family atmosphere where everyone feels welcome.

The Cherryfield and Columbia Falls Elementary Schools walked to Augusta last winter to keep their schools going for another year. These are SAD 37 schools with highest in the state MEA scores, Maine's Teacher of the Year at Narragausgus High School, and the EDGE Program that is a highly recognized afterschool program.

Small schools and local governance may seem 18th, 19th, or 20th century to some but as we strive for a 21st century education, we must look at the success of these schools. They have an excellent learning climate, support and encouragement from their town, and a belief by local citizens that they are in control of the destiny and decisions of them.

If regionalization goes through, it is my belief that many of the small schools of Maine would be closed. This may not happen in the first year, but in the second or third year of implementation it will happen.

Much of the \$262 million dollar savings of the Governor's Proposal is exaggerated and false. It contains many new spending initiatives such as the laptops for high school students that will eat much of the savings.

Much of the debate about school governance is about reducing property taxes. A “one size fits all” and “top down approach” will not work. Efficiencies can be made through regional planning alliances that can look for ways to save money yet not give up local control. This has been successful in different parts of Maine.

The EPS model should be reevaluated. Many smaller schools have been devastated under this formula. Under EPS, many larger districts have gotten large increases and smaller poor districts a much smaller one or loss. The assumptions under the formula aren't fair for small schools and should be reformed.

As an educator and citizen, I feel that governance reform should be separated from the budget process and be given time to be studied. Local control and decision making should be preserved.

We need not to win the war on budgets, taxes, consolidation, and governance and lose local and democratic control and an excellent education for Maine children. I thank the committees for their time and listening to my opinions.

February 5, 2007

All School District Restructuring and Consolidation Bills

Good day Senators Bowman and Rontundo, Representatives Norton and Fisher and members of the Appropriations and Financial Affairs and Education and Cultural Affairs Joint Committees. Thank you for allowing me to speak before you today. I come to you as a private citizen and not as a representative of any agency or entity. My name is Frank Sherburne and I am the father of two children who attend MSAD #55. I am also an educator of 20 years, hold two advanced degrees in Education, and am a Central Office Administrator. I am a Special Education Director. I come before you today to speak against the Governor's Proposed District Restructuring Plan. I have many reasons for my opposition to the proposed plan, but would agree that some changes may be necessary to the administrative structure of schools in Maine. There may need to be some absorbing of smaller Districts into larger ones, but not to the detriment of our children and not without the voice of the local taxpayer. In New England, we have a long and proud tradition of local control and this plan radically changes that aspect of our history. I have emailed many of you since the Governor's public presentation on January 5th. For those of you who did not get my emails, I will highlight my concerns regarding this plan:

1. The timeframe for implementation is too fast and may hurt Maine's children. The State and the Districts now have 17 months to implement this change. Lets look at one aspect of recent history of initiatives introduced by the Department of Education and their timeframes:
 - A. Local Assessment Systems: These systems began approximately 5 years ago through mandate under No Child Left Behind. The State and Local districts were trained and worked to implement the plan. Directives from the State changed frequently, but Districts persevered and made changes to meet the criteria of the State expectations. Last year, the Commissioner sent "teams" to Districts to assess where they were in the process of implementation. These teams were established to collect data, but were not designed to evaluate the current status of a District's Local Assessment System. These teams found a varying degree of quality and implementation. This after 4 years of Maine's implementation of the Local Assessment System. During this current school year, there is a moratorium in place on this system. This "moratorium" was to permit Districts to regroup and allow the State to assess how the system is meeting Maine's children's educational proficiency. At this point in the year, there has been little guidance and support to school districts from the Department of Education related to the Local Assessment System and its future. Commission Gendron did indicate on January 30th that there is now another change to the Local Assessment System based on Michael Fullan's report. It does not appear that she has consulted with District Curriculum Coordinators and once again, Districts may be asked to move the target for Maine children, with one perspective in mind. The Commissioner of Education has indicated that she based her new decision for Local Assessments Systems on Arkansas' Model, yet based on 4th grade NAEP scores in reading and math from 1992 through 2005, Maine out performs Arkansas. The Commissioner would be wise not to use Arkansas's "Model" as an exemplar for our children in Maine based on the assessment results available. Had the Commissioner analyzed Federal

testing requirements and collaborated with other New England states at the inception of this assessment requirement and developed a committee with "real authority" to create a plan for implementation of assessment systems, Districts would be on-track today and would not have wasted immense tax dollars on what is now being determined, the wrong way to assess learning. This should be a concern to taxpayers and the legislative body. After 4-years of Department of Education leadership, we are still not sure what our Local Assessment Systems should be and what our students' Standards for learning are. Now the Commissioner and Governor propose a radical change in the structure of school districts and school leadership in a period of 17 months. This seems rather ill conceived based on the Department of Education's history with just one aspect of Federal mandate.

- B. Movement of Children who qualify for Special Education and related services into the public school ages 0-5. This was not the initial suggestion of the Commission in the fall of 2005 when she initially proposed a change in CDS service provision. She indicated that the implementation of this plan would be studied and that a committee would determine any changes that might occur, yet she discussed a plan that was "not driven by the Governor's demand to reduce funding in this area by \$6,000,000.00 at the State level." The Commission carefully crafted her statements to indicate that schools know better how to identify children in need of Special Education and implement services, this implying that the current CDS system did not. I am not sure if CDS knows how to identify children in need of services, nor do I know the level of assistance and support the Department of Education has provided them. I am also not sure that the Commissioner considered the Task Force's findings in the development of the Restructuring Proposal. I am not indicating that public schools should not assume preschool services, but I am also not sure that this will save the taxpayers any money. The services being provided to children will need to continue to be provided, yet it appears that the cost of these services will shift from the State to the local taxpayer. There will be Federal grant money for the support of these programs, but as we all know, this money cannot supplant requirements of programs and services of the local Districts and have never covered the cost of programs and services. This proposed shift in early intervention services also indicates a timeframe that is swift and does not allow Districts to plan, coordinate with current services providers, and develop programs for children being embraced in the public school system. There is no real plan, just a concept and wording that children with disabilities age 0-5 will fall under the jurisdiction of the public school systems. This timeframe and nebulous "plan" does not serve our most venerable children well and is incongruent to the intent of early intervention services. This aspect of the School Restructuring Proposal needs to be seriously considered and the timeframe for implementation needs to be more realistic with children at the forefront of the decision.

2. Local Control:

- A. Disparity in District Size: This plan looks at children as numbers and dollars, not as learners. The formula is strictly based on numbers that were determined by someone. There does not appear to be a research base to the decision, but class sizes with a ratio of 17:1; although the Commissioner also indicated in a television interview that the class size will be no greater than 30. This leaves a great deal of potential variability. The District sizes also seem disparate. In Region I, there would be approximately 1,800 students. In Districts 23 and 26, student populations will be approximately 20 to 30 thousand students. These Districts have a greater student population than the Boston Public School System, one of New England's largest of 8,000 students. The number is concerning, but of more importance is how do Boston's children fare educationally in comparison to Maine's children. If we want our children to have similar educational experiences within a large school district than this may be a good option.
- B. District Boards and Local Advisory Boards: Under the proposed plan, there will be one Board for the Region. This Board will represent all constituents within its jurisdiction. Schools will have local Advisory Boards that will report to the Regional Board. Advisory Boards will have no voting power, but will only advise. Regional Boards will make all decisions for each member of the Regional District and smaller towns may lose their voice in the process based on the Regional Board's voting policy. The Commissioner has discussed that the Regional Boards will determine what schools will stay open and leave small towns whose schools may be slated for closure to either come up with local money to keep it open or lose a piece of their community. Children will be absorbed into other schools in the Region with no ability to change the decision of community school closures by the Regional Board by those immediately impacted by the decision. This also does not accomplish the Governor's intent if local towns can fund their local schools beyond the EPS formula granted by the new Regional District. This does not save local taxpayers. The assertion of greater local control seems inconceivable when implemented in reality.
- C. A Principal In Every Building: This is also an assertion of the Commissioner and Governor. What is not being stated is what schools will remain open and what Principals will be in them. There does not appear to be a clear understanding of how Regional Districts will determine Reduction in Force or how management will determine hiring practices. Although the concept of a Principal in every school is commendable, this plan leaves many uncertainties to the local towns.
- D. The Governor and Commissioner of Education have indicated that Maine's School Districts maintain a heavy Central Office Administrative structure, yet they have not given School Districts and local communities guidance on what would be considered an appropriate level of Central

Office Administrative support as it relates to the size of a District. The EPS formula encompasses many aspects of the State's share of a school's budget including personnel. It may be an appropriate starting point to identify and fund through EPS what is considered an appropriate Central Office Administration based on the given size of a school district. For small districts, this may include part-time administration and superintendents managing more than one administrative role. If in fact evidence is available to support the claim of the Governor and Commission of Education that School District Central Office Administration is too great, this should be brought forward and analyzed. Legislation should then be developed and implemented that sets the standards for appropriate Central Office Administration under the EPS formula. Districts can then determine if they desire maintaining a greater level of support with local taxation.

- E. Capital Investment: This area is also confusing and does not appear to save the local taxpayer. If the Regional Board closes a school, the town assumes the debt service. Beyond the fact that the town may not have had a voice in this decision, it leaves a building unused in a community to be paid for by the local taxpayers. This does not appear to demonstrate tax savings to those who will be paying debt service without support from the entire region.

3. Current Research:

- A. "How much of that expenditure represents inefficiency that might be reduced as a practical matter? Probably only a portion of it does. For one thing, Maine's high expenditures on K-12 education reflect the high value Mainers place on elementary and secondary education. Many Mainers no doubt support the added spending associated with the second-lowest student-teacher ratio in the country, at 11.5 to one.¹² By the same token, many Mainers continue to adhere to their traditional preference for a large number of small, locally controlled schools, which also increases costs. And then, the fact remains that Maine's educational results are above average as measured by multiple indices, as notes the Board of Education's Select Panel on Revisioning Education in Maine.¹³ That suggests significant value is being delivered, although a full assessment of the relative cost-efficiency with which Maine achieves its classroom results remains beyond the scope of his report. But for all that, significant savings probably could still be scored even leaving aside classroom and school-size changes. The reason: Maine's schools and school districts employ an unusually large number of administrators and other non-instructional staffers whose presence drives up expenditures and suggests inefficiency. Maine's K-12 system employs, for example, one administrator for every 127 students, much higher than the average ratio of one to 212 and the nation's fourth-highest rate of administration. Likewise, Maine taxpayers support one school or district administrator for

every 11.1 teachers—the country’s 9th-highest number of 3 administrators per teacher. 14 Such figures and others prepared by MPSRG’s Michael Moore for this report suggest that Maine could realize between \$10 million and \$35 million in annual K–12 education-costs savings without closing or consolidating a single school by reducing “administration” costs to various national or Maine consolidated-district standards.” Charting Maine’s Future.

This information identifies that costs related to School Administrative functions are high; however, it also indicates that Maine Citizens have made that choice by maintaining their local control over schools and school budgets. This excerpt from the report does not indicated a high level of Central Office Administrative support, only “an unusually large number of administrators and other non-instructional staffers.” This quote does not reflect evidence that Central Offices are consuming fiscal resources that could be directly provided to children, but that costs are driven up in the administrative positions and support personnel that make the District function. The Governor and Commissioner of Education have given taxpayers the false belief that by reducing School Administrative Central Offices to 26, a large tax benefit can be gained. This may or may not be the case. A smaller number of School Districts could reduce, maintain or increase the Central Office expenses. This is unknown, as no information has been brought forth by the Governor or the Commissioner of Education that supports this claim other than a reduction in the State’s share of spending under the EPS formula. The Governor and Commissioner do not appear to have considered that large school districts such as proposed in southern Maine will need layers of Central Office Administrative support and other non-instructional staffers to meet the demands of the students, school personnel, and families. The total cost savings presumed by the Governor will only be actualized by a reduction in the overall administrative structure of schools. With this in mind, the Commissioner has indicated that there will be “a Principal in every school,” yet what is not being told to the taxpayers is that their local school may not exist; therefore, there is not need for a principal in the existing building the local taxpayer feels is an essential element of the community. This lack of full disclosure to the taxpayers is deceitful and incomprehensible. This is also where the legislature should examine how the EPS formula can work to create ratios for administrative supports that will meet the needs of students, while maintaining an appropriate administrative balance.

B. “Efforts to relieve the tax burden in Maine currently seek efficiencies in public school administration. Claims that Maine schools are “over-administered” cite high ratios of administrators to teachers compared to national averages. Indeed, Maine spent on average \$65 more per pupil annually than the national average for administration between 1999 and 2003. Missing from the debate, however, is Maine’s relatively low expenditure on other staff and services to support instruction and students. While Maine spent \$65 more per pupil on administration, we spent \$290 less per pupil for auxiliary student support staff and services in the 1999-

2003 period. Maine schools consistently spend a lower proportion of their budgets on administration and a higher proportion on instruction than other states' schools. In 2003⁰⁴, for example, Maine's percentage of expenditures for administration was fourth lowest in the country and our expenditures on instruction were second highest. Historical trends demonstrate that growth in administrative numbers and expenditures parallels the growth in programs and services and the growth in school district size. Without the addition of auxiliary staff and services, administrators' work has expanded in both breadth and depth. Maine has faced for some time a "crisis" in leadership as talented teachers holding administrative certificates have chosen not to pursue administrative positions, in part because of the "many hats" and long hours required of these jobs. Finding efficiencies is far more complex than cutting administrative positions and consolidating services and districts – two strategies that will likely exacerbate current stressors on school leadership practice. Four choices face us in this respect: 1. What services currently provided by administration are we prepared to "do without"? 2. What administrative services are most essential to high student performance and therefore should be given top priority? 3. How shall we restructure administration to attract superb educational leaders to administrative roles? 4. Who is best positioned to make the best choices regarding administrative efficiencies? Maine's consistently high student performance belies claims that the quality of our public schools is "below national averages". Instead, it appears that we get what we pay for – better than the national average. Efforts to find administrative savings that ignore the whole picture risk subverting the support and leadership teachers, parents, and students currently have." Pursuing Administrative Efficiency for Maine's Schools: How Our Past Can Inform Our Current Decisions

"When we consider administrative expenses in the context of all expenditures to support student learning, however, these high figures are offset by Maine's low spending figures in other non-instructional support staff and services. According to the most recent national data from the National Center for Educational Statistics at the U.S. Department of Education (Table 2), from 1999 to 2003, Maine annually spent slightly less per pupil (\$2,527) for Student Services than the national average (\$2,578). Student Services encompasses all costs other than instructional salaries, capital outlay, and debt service). Contained within this large category of Student Services expenditures, Maine over this four year period annually:

*Spent \$22 more per pupil than the national average for "General Administration" (superintendents, special education administration, and associated district clerical)

*Spent \$43 more per pupil than the national average for "School Administration" (school-level administration, full-time department heads, and clerical)

*Spent \$104 less per pupil for “Student Support Services” (guidance, health, attendance, psychological & speech/audiology services)

*Spent \$98 less per pupil for “Other Support Services” (business support services, central support services, and other services not otherwise classified)

*Spent \$88 less per pupil than the national average for Instructional Staff Support Services (curriculum coordination and development, professional development, technology and media/library)

In other words, Maine averages \$290 less per pupil for staff services in support of students while averaging \$65 more per pupil for administration. It is clear that, in the total package of Student Services, Maine provides fewer funds for many types of support to students, teachers, and administrators but more funds for administration itself. This picture reinforces research showing Maine principals and superintendents, particularly in rural districts, to be under considerable pressure to do everything that larger districts and wealthier schools are doing, but to do so with less auxiliary support assistance than administrators have in many other states. By the same token, it is quite plausible that, without auxiliary staff and offices, teachers and parents seek assistance directly from the principal and the superintendent for a wider array of needs than is the case elsewhere.” Pursuing Administrative Efficiency for Maine’s Schools: How Our Past Can Inform our Current Decisions

Both of these excerpts are incongruent with the Governor’s and the Commissioner’s statements that School District’s are spending money inappropriately for Administrative expenses, thus taking money from direct students services and wasting tax dollars. The research provided by Dr. Donaldson does not support these claims. In fact, this research identifies that Maine is not spending excessively in the area of Administration and contradicts the claims made by these leaders.

Based on these two pieces of research, the Governor and Commissioner of Education’s current proposal falls short in its efforts to provide taxpayers with factual information. This legislative body should consider all available research before any decision is made related to School District restructuring. There has been little emphasis in this discussion about the children, who are going to be the most effected by this change and this legislature should allocate funds to study School District Structural Change as we do not want our children’s academic standing to suffer based on poor decision making of their leaders.

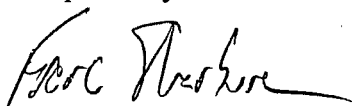
4. Where do go? Development of panel comprised of Maine constituents to work on District collaboration, restructuring, and cost savings.
 - A. A “Blue Robbin” Panel of educators (teachers, administrators, DOE, university professors and researchers, and support personnel), parents, and educational agencies should be developed to analyze current research, educational trends, current funding formulas, and School District

structures and make recommendations to the legislature for structural change in school districts. This panel would collect information from all constituents in Maine and then propose a comprehensive plan that is focused on quality educational services for children and evidence of real savings to Maine taxpayers. This would not a hypothetical assertion based on a number and formula that does not consider children, which is the current proposal.

- B. Districts should be encouraged to pool resources and engage in cooperative agreements for educational services. The State should provide incentives to Districts who work in a collaborative manner to share programs and services and develop shared agreements. An example of this could be the collaborative agreement to engage in cooperative bidding in the area of fuel expense. Facilities management is also a high area of cost for School Districts, which has not been mentioned in this discussion. District's currently put this out to bid independently to meet their own needs. As consumers, we all know that the more you buy, the less you pay. The State should be giving incentives to Districts who engage in the practice of cooperative bidding and pooling of human and physical resources. This not only works for facilities management, but for transportation, programs, and services.
- C. Current research does not support the assertions made by the Governor or the Commissioner of Education in their current plan. They have also neglected to identify how this will affect the quality of educational services provided to Maine's children and their families.

With this information in mind, I would encourage you to not act on any piece of legislation related to school restructuring, including changes in the CDS structure during this session. At this time, there are many bills being proposed, all of which have been developed in hast to resolve and/or counter the Governor's poorly planned restructuring concept. As a legislative body, please consider developing a "Blue Ribbon Committee" to assess and develop a plan that will meet the needs of taxpayers in Maine without harming our children in the process.

Respectfully Submitted



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SCHOOL REORGANIZATION: A SPECIAL EDUCATION PERSPECTIVE

I am Will Burrow, Special Education Director in School Union 44. My colleagues are Deborah Alden, Director in MSAD 52 and Marcye Gray, Director in MSAD 17. We represent over a dozen directors in Androscoggin, Oxford, and Cumberland Counties. Our comments today will focus on special education services and the impact of school reorganization on those services.

We strongly support a reorganization plan that is based on facts, thoughtful reflection, and thorough planning. The effort must do no harm to children and it must result in verifiable benefits to taxpayers. Realizing these goals can NOT be done in 18 months. The Governor and Legislature must not gamble with the welfare of Maine's children for the sole purpose of meeting an artificial short term fiscal goal. Other states have followed this path and they have not improved the status of children's learning and they have not decreased taxes.

Assessing the impact on special education of the Governor's proposal is almost impossible because of the lack of a clear regional management model. For example, use of the EPS formula could actually increase the number of special education administrators, but the decision on how to use the designated fiscal resource will be a decision made by a Superintendent and Board who could just as easily cut the current number in half. Even if current numbers remained unchanged a Superintendent could allocate the manpower by function instead of geography and such a decision would have profound results. The lack of a clear management model for special education and many other functions is just one fatal flaw in the Governor's proposal and perhaps other proposals as well.

Over \$60 million in savings is to come from special education. Where is the data? Where are the spreadsheets that show current expenses, projected expenses and savings? The EPS formulas do not consider extracurricular activities as "essential". While most people focus on sports these additional activities often include after school tutorial programs and other supplemental instructional activities. These efforts often focus on providing interventions to younger children so that academic problems are addressed early, thus avoiding later special education referrals. A reduction or elimination of all "non-essential" instructional services will have a significant impact on special education identification rates and costs. How will this generate "savings"?

We have been told through anecdotal stories that large savings can be obtained through the use of employees instead of contract professionals to provide PT, OT, Speech, and Psychology services. The reality is that special education directors use different models in different situations and most of us are very conscious of cost considerations. In rural areas these specialists are often reluctant to accept school district wages because they can make more money in the medical system serving adults. If we could find sufficient numbers of qualified staff we would have to pay them full benefits. They would be paid for travel time between schools, time that is not billable by a contract provider and time that could be used for direct instruction. Even if these problems can be solved many of these professions (e.g. psychology) have sub-specialties that would be lost if we had to rely on a single person with a single set of specific skills. Based on our knowledge of

current practices in Maine there will be very few, if any, real savings from altering current employment practices with regard to specialized therapies.

We are now waiting for DOE to issue new special education regulations. There are several elements in the proposed regulations that will add costs, including added costs in the regular education part of the budget. Have the costs of these new regulations been factored into the projected "savings" in special education services or into revised EPS formulas?

Another area of projected savings in special education involves the creation of more regional programs. Does this mean that all private special purpose schools will no longer be used by public schools because regional boards will create their own programs? Will transportation costs be decreased with new regional programs or will children with very special needs now spend more time on buses? Is the intent to increase the number of segregated schools where only special needs children are served? Could current schools serving small communities with small numbers of students be closed to community students only to remain as educational centers for the handicapped? This would certainly avoid the need to obtain local approval to shut down a current community school. An increase in segregated schools or even more segregated classrooms would mean a return to the special education service models of the 1960s, something that other states have done when consolidation became policy. In Maine that action could easily encourage individual and class action litigation, something that will certainly not generate savings.

Increasing class sizes in general education classes will impact special education. In many places classes are small enough now that individual special education students can be mainstreamed with minimal "in class" support. If regular education classes are increased by only a few students in each class, the dynamics of the classes may change significantly. In larger classes there will be an increased demand for more ed techs (i.e. paraprofessional staff) or there will be more need for resource room teachers. With small class sizes regular education teachers can work collaboratively with special education staff to help special education students and students at risk of special education referral. With an increase in class size regular education teachers will not have the time to give extra time to special education students or "at risk" students. Predictably, an increase in class size also will mean an increase in the number and severity of behavior problems. If this occurs there will be indirect costs (e.g. disruption to the learning of other students) as well as an increase in direct costs (e.g. specialized program increases and community mental health costs). The most likely outcome of larger class sizes will be an increase in the number of special education students and the associated costs. None of these outcomes will generate "savings".

A decrease in student performance on state wide assessments, especially for children in the lower quarter of the class, will be a likely outcome. Increasing class sizes appears to be one of the primary sources of savings in the Governor's projections. The real costs of a significant and sudden change in class sizes will not be apparent until the Governor is gone. If the people of Maine will accept average student performance along with average costs the decision should be made with a full and open discussion of the possible consequences of that decision.


If there is a significant decrease in the number of special education administrators, then principals will be required to accept additional responsibilities. Given their comprehensive responsibilities there should be a question as to whether they will have the time to perform all of their assigned responsibilities adequately. Because most principals do not have an extensive special education background they are more likely to make decisions that are not aligned with law or regulation and thus be more likely to be challenged by parents. This will lead to an increase in due process complaints. Working through a due process complaint is very time consuming, again for an individual where time is a precious commodity. Even when successful, a due process complaint can cost a district \$15,000+ in legal fees. An unsuccessful hearing can run double that figure or more, plus the costs of providing a program that can exceed \$100,000 a year. Also note, by history DOE often encourages parents to file complaints and never provides the slightest level of support to a district, even if the case goes into the federal legal system on appeal. Where are the "savings" in such a scenario?

Where administrators (special ed or otherwise) are not physically located in proximity to parents, parents will find it more difficult to communicate with or obtain support from, a professional with specialized knowledge. The parents with the greatest need for support will be the ones most damaged by a more bureaucratic management system. The overall quality of "customer service" will suffer and that will mean that small problems will become large problems and that will generate more formal complaints with the results noted a moment ago.

Where is the data? Where are the facts? Where are the savings? If the Governor's proposal is not accepted will the alternative that is adopted answer all of the above questions? Special education is but one part of a much larger organizational structure. If the "savings" projected for the full system are anything like those projected for special education, what will the taxpayer conclude? If the savings are an illusion and property taxes do not go down, what of the credibility of the Governor and the legislature? Is school consolidation the tax reform the citizens have demanded?

The legislature has an opportunity to address school reform and tax reform and to do both effectively. The problems are too complex to rush the process. To enact comprehensive school reform in just a few months can only yield unintended consequences for children, communities, and taxpayers. We can, we must, do it right!

Thank you for listening.



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TO: Hon. Peter B. Bowman, Senate Chair
Hon. Jacqueline R. Norton, Representative Chair
Members of the Joint Legislative Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs

FR: Barbara Dee, Ed.D, Director of Student Support Services, Portland Public Schools

RE: Testimony on the Governor's School Consolidation Proposal

DT: February 5, 2007

I believe the Governor's proposal will devastate special education services in Portland and will result in greatly increased costs for this federally mandated and heavily scrutinized program.

It has been very difficult to assess the impact of this proposal since there is no real information on how regionalization will affect Special Education. The entire picture is unclear, especially regarding the projected \$250 million in savings. The Governor's proposal is significantly lacking in research and appears to be based on very sketchy and possibly inaccurate data. For example a recent conversation at the state level revealed that some staff there believe all of special education is funded through federal grants. In reality about 20% of the cost of special education in Portland is funded by federal dollars; the rest comes from the local budget.

Portland already shares transportation and professional development and is working with other districts to develop regionalized programs for low incidence populations such as students with behavioral/emotional disabilities. I believe additional sharing of resources is desirable in the area of special education and that we can consolidate some functions, but regionalization can not negatively impact the services that are provided to students and that are mandated by federal and state statute. These services are strictly delineated under those statutes and are very complicated to administer. I believe the Governor's proposal significantly under-estimates the intricacies of special education administration and the sometimes expensive and mandated realities of Pupil Evaluation Team determinations. The federal government has never supported the promised 40% of special education costs and any lack of procedural compliance, which is strictly supervised by the directors of special education, will further jeopardize existing federal funding.

If the level of oversight of special education services is reduced the costs of special education will increase due to the procedural compliance complexity and litigious nature of special education. One due process hearing can cost \$60,000 to \$100,000. I believe

that legal costs for due process and consultation will increase dramatically under the governor's proposal because there will be fewer directors to pay attention to significant issues.

The emphasis on regional centers for students with special education needs could severely compromise federal and state statutes on least restrictive environment (LRE). Will Region 23 develop more restrictive special education placement because there are now enough students in the regions to place them all together for services? Since the Governor's proposal does not describe the intent of the regionalized centers, it is difficult to gauge the ultimate impact, but federal and state statutes are very clear that special education must be delivered to students in a continuum of placements that always starts in the general education classroom, in the student's home school. Many of our students with severe needs attend school in their neighborhood school, or at least in their home district, with the children that will be part of their adult community. I fear that this reliance on regional centers will remove many students from their neighborhood schools and communities, and will create a system of segregated special education that was ruled unconstitutional by the Brown Decision in 1954 and PL 94-142 (Education of the Handicapped Child Act) in 1975.

The Governor's Proposal depicts a \$61.9 million dollar saving in special education over a 3-year time frame. There is no clear picture of where these savings would occur, but it appears to be based on converting contracted employees to salaried staff, a process that will not generate any savings at all once salaries and benefits are assigned to the new staff. There are no contracted employees in the Portland Public Schools, except for short-term consultants. Districts that utilize contractors typically do so because of the distinct lack of qualified personnel in more rural parts of the state. This feature of the Governor's proposal will not address this dearth of qualified related services providers and will, in fact, increase employee costs.

The proposal also suggests one Special Education Administrator in each of the 26 regions with another layer of administration, possibly assistant special education administrators, underneath. This increase in bureaucracy will merely impede the mandated special education process and create more opportunities for non-compliance with regulations and delays in students access to services. In the Governor's proposal, the funds for Special Education Administrators are reportedly not in the Central Office Administration figure of \$186.00 per student but in special education funds. Apparently funding will be available to employ the current Special Education Administrators but the new regional boards would make the decision about how the regional needs in the area of Special Education Administration would be met. These elusive depictions increase my fears that the litigious and regulated nature of special education administration has been overlooked in the Governor's proposal, and that a spectacular rise in legal costs and a significant decline in the quality of services to children will occur if this proposal is enacted.

I attend and chair Pupil Evaluation Team meetings, keep track of compliance with federal and state statute and facilitate whatever is necessary for students to receive quality special education services. Who will do that job if special education administrator positions are

eliminated by Regional Boards with little understanding of the intricate nature of special education? When this responsibility falls to principals or teachers the demands on their time will increase exponentially and will require intense training in the area of Special Education Law. This impending lack of oversight for the most highly regulated educational program in the state has significant and detrimental financial implications.

The data to support the regionalization of Special Education appears sketchy at best and invites concerns that the Governor's consolidation plan is potentially illegal and litigious. To determine a cost savings by taking 10% of what is spent on Special Education in the state over a 3-year period and not have a plan on how this money savings will occur is irresponsible. I strongly recommend that extensive planning and the operation of pilot regionalization projects happen before a large-scale dissolution of current special education services and programs leaves a devastating impact on some of Maine's most vulnerable citizens.

Local Lessons About Effective Educational Change

Governor Baldacci's proposal and other plans to modify the administrative structure of school units in Maine have significant implications for all Maine Citizens. Financing education, assuring representative governance and structuring how education is administered are essential components for our state's continued economic and cultural growth and development.

Over the past 8 years, nine school districts, the United Technology Center in Bangor, Maine, Child Development Services of Penobscot County and the University of Maine have developed a collaborative model that has changed the institutional relationships and improved the education of our children. This model, the Penobscot River Educational Partnership (PREP), has created greater effectiveness and efficiency in our schools and these were the primary reasons the partnership was created. PREP supports the goals of increased efficiency and effectiveness. Our successes include the following:

- PREP offers ongoing programs of professional development for less than half the cost of providing the activities as individual units.
- PREP has hired psychologists and speech therapists, at a rate below that available to school units individually. In addition, service has been provided to outlying districts where, previously, they were unavailable.
- PREP has increased the consistency within our districts in planning and implementing improvement initiatives by providing time for key professionals, guidance counselors, curriculum coordinators and special education directors to work together. Initiatives on teacher preparation and early literacy are also ongoing.
- PREP, with advice and consultation from our higher education partners at the University of Maine, is beginning the implementation of a Business Services Initiative involving group purchasing and defining potential areas of consolidation in the provision of business services to our public schools.
- PREP has provided leadership, information and direction in dealing with significant policy issues relating to our schools.

In building this collaboration and achieving these successes we have learned that there are four critical elements to effective change in education that, in the current climate of impending change, we believe should be considered in evaluating the various plans to restructure our schools. These include:

- Trust
- A Clearly Defined Mission
- A Thorough Analysis of Possible Solutions
- Preparing People for Change

Trust is the bedrock upon which individuals and units come together to identify and agree on solutions to issues they face. Trust is not legislated, it cannot be imposed, but rather develops when individuals work face to face, sharing their goals, developing a common understanding of issues and solutions, benefiting all involved. A change in the overall structure of education in Maine will require a significant level of trust. The issue of local control over education is basically an issue of trust. Before massive structural changes are accepted, trust must be developed that the proposed change is in the best interest of the children.

A Clearly Defined Mission is essential. High taxes and the ability of communities to pay are legitimate reasons to ensure that schools are as efficient as they can be. The mission in the Governor's plan is unclear. Is it to reduce taxes with a top down directive, or to initiate the planning needed to determine the most effective and efficient structure for our schools? The Brookings Study called for an Educational Strategic Plan and Investment for Education. Our partnership recommends a clarification of mission and a thoughtful, well-planned approach.

A Thorough Analysis of Possible Solutions is essential to any major change. Individuals need to know what options were considered, others' experience with similar changes (what have other states done?) and how the proposed change fits with the reality of their lives. The magnitude of change proposed by the Governor requires these types of analyses. Answers for difficult questions should be forthcoming and the public should not be satisfied with a response that specific issues will be addressed at some future time.

Preparing People for Change is the last, and most time consuming step in the change process as it requires reaching multiple groups of individuals whose lives will be affected. During the 2005-06 school year, the proposed Bangor Region #8 had 16,000 students, 1,300 teachers (FTE) and 62 school-based administrators (FTE). Any reorganization affects parents and concerned taxpayers. Time will be needed to plan for and implement organizational changes that impact this many people. Developing a regional school board, hiring a superintendent, consolidating financial structures where operating expenses were \$127,000,000 during the 2005-06 school year is a significant undertaking. Costs such as debt service, major capitol outlay, transportation and federal expenditures are additional costs to the units. Keeping educational professionals and parents involved in the process is a significant undertaking. Our partnership recommends that time be spent with each of these groups helping them understand, embrace and support change toward efficiency and effectiveness in education.

Implementing a successful restructuring of school Maine schools will require attention to the four critical elements described above. All four work together, powerfully, when time is taken to address change in a systematic way. Certainly, Maine schools can be more effective, and they must be more efficient. We need to design a better organizational structure for our schools. Quick solutions won't work. Comprehensive planning, done within a specified time frame, involving the public, offers the best opportunity to provide high quality education, while at the same time becoming more cost effective and responsive to Maine taxpayers.

Owen Maurais worked 31 years in public education as a teacher, special education director, assistant superintendent and superintendent of schools. He is the Executive Director of the Penobscot River Educational Partnership.

Editorial

Thursday, February 1, 2007 ■ Section II, Page ONE

A Plan Worth Considering

Governor John Baldacci saw fit not to enlist the help of educators, public officials and citizens around the state in devising a controversial plan to streamline school administration in Maine. As a result, those people — and there are many — who view with skepticism the Governor's sweeping proposal to reduce the number of school administrative systems from 286 to 26 are only now getting the opportunity to weigh in with alternate plans for consideration.

Of the proposals that have surfaced so far, a plan advanced by Stephen L. Bowen, a teacher, former state legislator and now adjunct scholar at the Maine Heritage Policy Center, has more merit than any we've seen.

Bowen believes it is possible to consolidate many school administrative functions in a way that will achieve substantial monetary savings — a primary goal of the Governor — without sacrificing local control, parental involvement and quality of education. That approach involves the creation of Education Service Districts, which already have been employed in Massachusetts, Pennsylvania and Minnesota as a compromise to the kind of consolidation proposed by the Governor.

Bowen, who grew up right here in Hancock County in the small town of Penobscot, discusses his proposal in detail in "The Maine View," a Heritage Policy Center publication that can be found online at www.maineconomy.org.

He offers a compelling argument, bolstered by considerable and thorough research, that consolidation that extends beyond combining very small school districts — those below the 300- to 500-student level — produces minimal, if any, cost savings and may actually result in cost increases. Further, Bowen notes that better than half of all administrative costs occur at the individual school level and will continue unless schools are closed and consolidated, which the Governor says will not occur under his plan.

Bowen also cites studies that indicate a correlation between smaller school districts and high student scores on standardized tests and show that parents become less involved in schools as a consequence of consolidation.

"How does the state maintain the high level of student achievement, parental involvement and administrative accountability more commonly found in small districts, yet squeeze some administrative savings out of the system?" asks Bowen.

The answer, he suggests, is the creation of regional cooperative associations — Education Service Districts — that take on the management of various shared non-instructional services, thus gaining

economies of scale freeing school boards to "focus their time and efforts on the fundamental mission of schools, which is teaching and learning." Just as companies often contract out services such as payroll, accounting, advertising, shipping and information technology, so could school districts do the same with an ESD.

Bowen cites studies showing that savings from collaboration facilitated by existing ESDs ranges from 15 percent to 50 percent. For example, he says, a single ESD in Minnesota was credited by its 98 member districts with saving a combined \$16 million a year. Applying a formula used in one study to Maine, Bowen calculated that a savings of 20 percent on even a quarter of the approximately \$627 million that Maine spends annually on non-instructional services would yield savings of more than \$30 million.

One of the greatest concerns about the Governor's consolidation proposal is transfer of local control to the single boards governing the 26 super-sized school districts. That would not occur under the ESD model. Since ESDs most commonly are governed by a board comprised of school board officials from member districts, local boards would retain both oversight authority and the power of the purse.

Bowen offers a "roadmap" for the creation of Education Service Districts in Maine, noting that the implementation could take place in stages with local school officials identifying areas where regional cooperation makes sense. He also discusses the statutory changes that would be necessary to allow for the creation of ESDs.

With every passing day, it is becoming more evident that the Governor's dramatic top-down proposal is deeply flawed. Bowen correctly observes "that the people in the best position to make decisions about the most appropriate and cost-effective means of providing educational services to our kids are not bureaucrats in Augusta or two dozen superintendents scattered across the state, but those closest to the classroom — parents, the school community and locally elected school boards."

Bowen's proposal is a thoughtful and measured approach that acknowledges the need for greater efficiency in Maine's K-12 school system and counters the flawed notion that fewer, larger districts will produce better results at lower cost than the current system. The Education Service District model deserves the same level of discussion, both within the 123rd Legislature and in communities across the state, that the Governor's proposal is now receiving. Every Maine citizen has a huge stake in the outcome of the debate.

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We the people of Maine...

THE MAINE HERITAGE POLICY CENTER

**Testimony of Hon. Stephen L. Bowen
Maine Heritage Policy Center**

**Sen. Rotundo, Rep. Fischer, members of the Appropriations Committee,
Sen. Bowman, Rep. Norton, members of the Education Committee,**

I am Stephen Bowen, I am a former member of this body, a Middle School teacher and an analyst and consultant with the Maine Heritage Policy Center, and I am here to testify neither for nor against the Governor's Part MM school consolidation proposal.

Last fall I was approached by MHPC to do some work on education policy issues, and knowing that consolidation would be an issue this session, I began doing some research on it. In the midst of that work, the governor announced his Part MM consolidation plan, and so our attention turned to that.

I suspect that you will hear plenty today about what is wrong with the governor's plan, so I will not belabor that at this time, but suffice it to say there was enough in the plan to concern me, as a teacher, parent, and policymaker, that I redirected the research we were doing to see if we could find some workable alternatives to the plan that would generate savings without so dramatically changing the way schools are governed in this state.

Two weeks ago, we released the Maine Heritage Policy Center plan, which calls for the creation of Educational Services Districts, which are regionally created and governed cooperative bodies that would provide shared services to member school districts, allowing for cost savings through efficiencies of scale, while keeping the local control that research says results in better schools and more accountable school administration.

As our report shows, Education Service Districts have generated savings in countless states. I have attached a quick survey of the savings outlined in the various reports I consulted in developing the report, and you can see from these examples that ESD's are being used in very inventive ways across the nation, and that they are generating real savings while preserving community involvement in schools.

In the report we released, which I had distributed to both legislative bodies two weeks ago and which I've included in my materials today, we outlined how this proposal would work and laid out a "roadmap" of sorts for the development of these service districts. In our model, ESD's are developed regionally, by ad-hoc commissions of regional school leaders, who we feel would be in the best position to decide which services might be more effectively regionalized.

I know that you are under a bit of a time crunch and that there is not a lot of patience with continuing to simply talk about doing this. I know we need to start getting this done. So I would suggest that you look the model established in Florida state statute, which requires that ESD's regionalize a minimum of three services from a list established in statute. That may be a way of gently prodding the ESD's to adopt a number of shared services, without mandating which specific ones from Augusta, something we tried to avoid doing in our proposal.

On the subject of state statute, I was always surprised in my time in the legislature how infrequently we look to other states to see how they are solving the problems that we struggle to solve here, and so I have also provided for you a quick guide to ESD statute in a few other states. I think you'll find, as I did, that different states take different approaches to implementing ESD's. Much of the language in other states is simply permissive as opposed to proscriptive, but there are states, such as Georgia and Texas which have very thoroughly developed state statutes on ESD's. Washington state statute, for instance, has very good language about changing the borders of the ESD, which may be something you'll want to include if you do indeed set the borders in statute at this time. Minnesota statute has language about using ESD's to provide services to municipal governments as well as school systems, which would give you a means of generating still more savings on the local level.

The spreadsheet I put together is just meant to be a quick guide to approaches in a handful of states, but I would advise the committee to resist reinventing the wheel here and simply look to other states, take different pieces from statute here and there until you get the right blend of generating some real savings through regionalization while keeping the local management of schools that is our tradition here in Maine.

You have a long day ahead, so I will resist going through all this material with you now, but I do want to leave you with an observation about local control. As I said at the outset, I will let others here express their concerns about the governor's plan, and we mention several in our report, but there is one fact I want you to keep in mind as you move forward on this issue. And that is that according to the National School Boards Association, there are 1877 school board members in this state governing our schools. These are local citizens and community leaders who, for the most part, volunteer their time and expertise to make our schools better. Under the governor's proposal, those 1877 board members would be replaced by less than 400 at the most.

That is the facet of the plan that most concerns me – the large-scale removal of community leaders and parents from the decision-making process in our schools. Our plan, the ESD proposal, keeps local management of those schools, which research shows is better for educational outcomes, and still generates the savings that can bring needed property tax relief.

That is why I am testifying neither for nor against the proposal, because I believe finding savings and lower property taxes is critically important and I applaud to governor for focusing his efforts on this goal, but we do need a different approach, and I feel that our plan is a more workable one, one that has been tried elsewhere, and one that is already getting a lot of support from across the state.

I have given you a lot to digest here, and as always I stand ready to assist you in any way I can to develop a plan that works for Maine's schools and kids. Thank you very much for your time and attention.

We the people of Maine...

THE MAINE HERITAGE POLICY CENTER

ESD Savings from across the nation

- **Washington state: \$100,000 annually on insurance costs for nine districts in an ESD**
(Arfstrom, Kari, "Are ESA's Successful?" Perspectives, Fall 2004)
- **Minnesota: 70% savings on technology services, 45% on equipment repair, 44% on computer report, 49% on health and safety costs, 80% on professional development costs, 12% to 33% on insurance costs, 22% to 52% savings through bulk purchasing**
(Arfstrom, Kari, "Are ESA's Successful?" Perspectives, Fall 2004)
- **Oregon: Clackamas ESD, 85% savings on media center materials, 41% savings on printing costs, 24% on professional development**
(Arfstrom, Kari, "Are ESA's Successful?" Perspectives, Fall 2004)
- **Massachusetts: Greater Lawrence ESD, 78% on shared staff, 22% on printing, 39% on recruitment costs**
(Stanley, Craig, "Education Collaboratives" Pioneer Institute, 2003)
- **Texas: Region 17, 50% on payroll and accounting**
(Deloitte Research, *Driving More Money into the Classroom: The Promise of Shared Services*, 2005)
- **New Jersey: Somerset County, \$10 million saved on shared services, Salem County, 50% on business services**
(Deloitte Research, *Driving More Money into the Classroom: The Promise of Shared Services*, 2005)
- **Illinois: Bloom Township, 75% on business services**
(Deloitte Research, *Driving More Money into the Classroom: The Promise of Shared Services*, 2005)
- **Minnesota: Southwest and West Central ESD, 25% on group purchasing, 68% on video services, 45% teacher training – overall 35%**
(Stanley, Craig, "Education Collaboratives" Pioneer Institute, 2003)
- **Massachusetts Organization of Educational Collaboratives study – 40% to 60% on special education, 25% to 50% on therapists**
(Stanley, Craig, "Education Collaboratives" Pioneer Institute, 2003)

A SURVEY OF EDUCATIONAL SERVICE DISTRICT STATUTES IN OTHER STATES.

State Statute	Established?	Mandatory membership?	Membership	State assistance to establish?	Funding	Specified services	Stated purpose of ESD's	Notes:
Colorado 22-5-101	Local agreement	No	1 per member board, Min:five	Yes, technical support	State grants for specific programs, member boards	Standards based teaching, staff devel, technology, co-op purchasing, at-risk programs	"for the creation of boards of cooperative services where feasible for purposes of enabling two or more school districts to cooperate in furnishing services"	Very well-developed statute
Massachusetts 40-4E	Local agreement	No	1 per member board	Yes, advisory member on board	State grants, member boards	None specified, determined by agreement	"to conduct education programs and services which shall complement and strengthen the school programs of member school committees and increase educational opportunities for children."	Least developed statute - allows formation, little more.
Georgia 20-2-270 to 274	State Board	Yes, as estab by State	Supt's of each district	Yes, ESD's are an arm of the state	State matching grants (locals pay 1/4), member schools, state funding for standards work	Educ research, staff devel,curric devel, assessment, technology, mentoring,drug abuse programming, assistance to low performing schools	"providing shared services designed to improve the effectiveness of educational programs and services to local school systems; providing instructional programs directly to selected public school students in the state..."	The most "top-down", state managed model. Established and run by the state.
New York Article 40, section 1950	Local agreement	No	5-15 mems from member boards	Yes, department assists	State grants, member boards	Almost any. State helps fund targeted programs	"for the purpose of carrying out a program of shared educational services in the schools of the supervisory district and for providing instruction in such special subjects as the commissioner may approve.	State targets funds for specific services

State Statute	Established?	Mandatory membership?	Membership	State assistance to establish?	Funding	Specified services	Stated purpose	Notes:
Florida Sec 1001.451	Local agreement	No	From member boards	None in statute	Funded by member boards, state grants available up to \$50,000 for shared services development	At a minimum, three of the following services: GT/SpEd; teacher education; environmental education; grant procurement; data processing; health insurance; risk management; staff development; purchasing; or planning and accountability.	"to provide a full range of programs to larger numbers of students, minimize duplication of services, and encourage the development of new programs and services"	"Minimum of three services" may be a model for assuring use of ESD's and protecting local choice
Texas 8.001	Estab by commissioner	Yes, as estab by State	7 members - Commish sets rules for appointment or election	Established by state	Funded under state school funding formula, may apply for additional funding for specific, planned programs	Low-performing schools, teacher training, standards based teaching assistance, other services as requested by districts	"assist school districts in improving student performance in each region of the system, enable school districts to operate more efficiently and economically; and implement initiatives assigned by the legislature or the commissioner"	Very good model - may be a good framework to use to develop Maine ESD's
Washington 28a.310.010	Estab by state board, language included to allow for changes to borders of ESD	Yes, as estab by State	7, one from each of 7 ESD districts within each ESD service area (like county commissioner seats)	None-established by state	State and local funding as established in statute	Joint purchasing, media center materials, student transportation, data collection, teacher training	"Provide cooperative and informational services to local school districts", assist state board, "Provide services... to assure equal educational opportunities."	Good language on how to change borders of ESD's once they are in place
Minnesota 123a.21	Borders estab by state, membership and use of services voluntary. Municipal and other governments may be members	No	majority of board from member school districts, other at-large members elected by board	No mention in statute	Funded by member districts, state funding as available	Statute features a list of 23 services that may be provided, though that list is not limiting. Board shall identify services to be provided in an annual plan	"to perform planning on a regional basis and to assist in meeting specific needs of clients in participating governmental units which could be better provided by [the ESD] than by the members themselves."	Inclusion of other, non-education governments may be a model for Maine



Testimony to the Joint Committees on Education and Cultural Affairs and
Appropriations and Financial Affairs
Proposals for School District Regionalization

February 5, 2007

Senators Rotundo and Bowman, Representatives Norton and Fischer and the
Members of the Joint Standing Committees on Education and Cultural Affairs and
Appropriations and Financial Affairs:

I am Peter Geiger, Executive Vice President of Geiger Bros. in Lewiston and
Chair of the Maine Coalition for Excellence in Education. Members of our
organization have testified before this committee many times urging you to *stay
the course* with Maine's Learning Results because we believe firmly that our
vitality as a state depends on a high performing public education system.

We come before you again today to offer our assistance in facilitating the
process you have before you. That is, finding a **comprehensive, workable** school
district regionalization plan that makes both **educational and economic** sense.
We agree with Senator Bowman when he said this past week that "the status quo is
not an option."

We have shared with members of the 123rd Legislature the guiding
principles by which we believe that any plan should be judged. These criteria were
developed by members of our Board who are experienced business and education
leaders.

MCEE Testimony

Regionalization proposals

1. Ensures the best **educational results** for Maine students – **including full implementation of Maine’s Learning Results.**
2. Requires the efficient use of Maine’s limited resources in order to achieve #1.
3. Ensures **accountability for student achievement** and savings with **specific targets & consequences** for not meeting the targets.
4. Assures **EQUITY** for all Maine students.
5. **Mandates district consolidation** and with a rational strategy to guide the process.
6. Provides the **necessary resources to support the consolidation process** across the state.
7. Ensures **appropriate balance between State and Local authority** to produce improved results for all Maine students.
8. Assures **best practices** employed at all levels in all components of the new school district organizations.

The Coalition proposes that the **principal objective of any regional consolidation plan should be improved student performance. We support the call for a more efficient use of resources and effective governance for Maine schools insofar as the decisions are based on both the educational impact and economics.** Fewer, better structured and resourced districts will improve coordination, communication and result in a more defined common purpose that will improve learning for all students.

As we said in our communication with Legislators, we applaud the Governor and all the others who have proposed bold action on such an emotional issue. The time is right to do the right thing regardless of politics – we have to keep our focus on what is best for Maine students.

MCEE Testimony

Regionalization proposal

There is one additional point we want to make and that is that we believe it is unfortunate that superintendents (and Maine's public education system in general) are somehow being made out to be the "bad guys" in this regionalization conversation. We are in the '**state we are in**' because we have not had the political will to effect real change. There is no way this should fall on the backs of Maine's hard working school administrators. Every one of us played a role in creating the problem. Now let's find a solution.

Thank you.

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**

Pete Johnson
Comments to the Appropriations and Education Committees
Augusta, Maine
5 February 2007

1. I am Pete Johnson the Chair of School Union 60 and Vice President of the Maine Small Schools Coalition.
2. Four years ago I didn't think I had a dog in this fight. I was retired, my children were grown and I was motivated by the onerous tax burden that we face here in Maine.
3. After the Governor's initial attempt at consolidation initiatives and participating in a study on the cost/benefits of consolidating our High School in Greenville with the closest High School some 30 miles from the center of our town and 60 miles from the most distant boundary of our district I changed my point of view.
4. The school in Greenville and many other rural towns are closely tied to:
 - a. Economic condition and future of our community
 - b. The essence of the Maine rural communities its brand if you accept that terminology
 - c. Critical to the future of our most important resource – our youth
5. Personally, I am for the adoption of an organization of Office of Regional Cooperation to study, staff and implement regional approaches that will improve educational services and cost efficiencies. This could be along the line of MMA's approach. When I say staff I mean that they would follow a procedure that would gain local support and most importantly approval for the proposed action.
6. Incentives and penalties should be developed to encourage these efficiencies and educational delivery improvements.
7. This group should consider the suggestions that MSSC developed for the Governor and take action to implement those agreed on by any region or state wide if appropriate.
8. They should establish a set of criteria to evaluate regionalization initiatives. A good draft of these criteria is contained in the document "Rural Schools District Reorganization Standards" which also can be found on the MSSC web site.
9. The Office of Regional Cooperation should be empowered to evaluate all administrative requirements levied on school districts/unions with the goal of eliminating requirements that do not provide a benefit greater than the cost. I was most pleased that the DOE is eliminating the LAS requirement. They should have done it years ago, but better late than never. It does remind me that bureaucracies tend to develop requirements for their subordinate organizations that often do not serve any reasonable purpose and once established live forever.
10. There is much information, and unfortunately much disinformation, surrounding this issue. After much study, I believe that the Governor's initiative will not save money and will it cause the closure of small rural schools. If implemented on the schedule proposed by the Governor it will damage our educational system for years.

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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**

Pete Johnson
Comments to the Appropriations and Education Committees
Augusta, Maine
5 February 2007

1. I am Pete Johnson the Chair of School Union 60 and Vice President of the Maine Small Schools Coalition.
2. Four years ago I didn't think I had a dog in this fight. I was retired, my children were grown and I was motivated by the onerous tax burden that we face here in Maine.
3. After the Governor's initial attempt at consolidation initiatives and participating in a study on the cost/benefits of consolidating our High School in Greenville with the closest High School some 30 miles from the center of our town and 60 miles from the most distant boundary of our district I changed my point of view.
4. The school in Greenville and many other rural towns are closely tied to:
 - a. Economic condition and future of our community
 - b. The essence of the Maine rural communities its brand if you accept that terminology
 - c. Critical to the future of our most important resource – our youth
5. Personally, I am for the adoption of an organization of Office of Regional Cooperation to study, staff and implement regional approaches that will improve educational services and cost efficiencies. This could be along the line of MMA's approach. When I say staff I mean that they would follow a procedure that would gain local support and most importantly approval for the proposed action.
6. Incentives and penalties should be developed to encourage these efficiencies and educational delivery improvements.
7. This group should consider the suggestions that MSSC developed for the Governor and take action to implement those agreed on by any region or state wide if appropriate.
8. They should establish a set of criteria to evaluate regionalization initiatives. A good draft of these criteria is contained in the document "Rural Schools District Reorganization Standards" which also can be found on the MSSC web site.
9. The Office of Regional Cooperation should be empowered to evaluate all administrative requirements levied on school districts/unions with the goal of eliminating requirements that do not provide a benefit greater than the cost. I was most pleased that the DOE is eliminating the LAS requirement. They should have done it years ago, but better late than never. It does remind me that bureaucracies tend to develop requirements for their subordinate organizations that often do not serve any reasonable purpose and once established live forever.
10. There is much information, and unfortunately much disinformation, surrounding this issue. After much study, I believe that the Governor's initiative will not save money and will it cause the closure of small rural schools. If implemented on the schedule proposed by the Governor it will damage our educational system for years.

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

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

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Aimee Nichols
Mindy Hanson**



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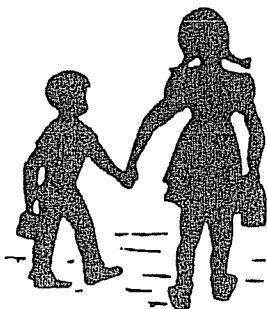
**TO: The Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs
and the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and
Financial Affairs**

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.**



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 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

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

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?



GOVERNOR BALDACCI'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

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

**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 Reorganization 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.

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 ~~my~~ 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 ~~a~~ 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

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

**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.

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.

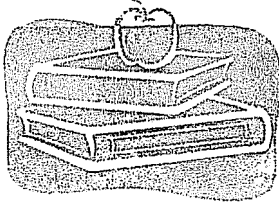
If I'm reading page eleven of the "Brookings report" correctly, we should conduct one or two pilots in regional service delivery before we make a full-scale change. We'd know then what exactly the costs would be. Our Governor seems to have ignored this suggestion, and quite honestly, something is not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



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.

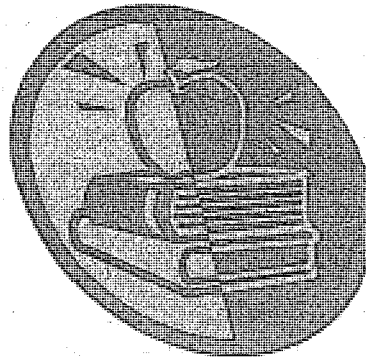
Another point I would like to make is that almost all people, ages 0 through 100+, are being negatively affected in some way if all the changes being proposed are put through legislation. Special Education and Services for ages 0 through 5 will negatively change things for these children if CDS is cut 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 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

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!!

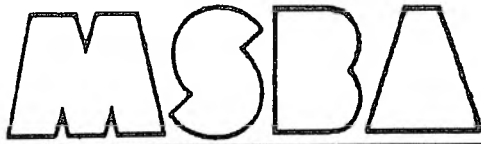
The State should not mandate consolidation but set parameters with the incentive being through the funding process. Both incentive and disincentives should be in the plan. For example, all K-8 districts must merge with a K-12 school system. Let that K-8 district decide where it wants to go and negotiate 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.



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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:



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.

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.

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,



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

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

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.

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:

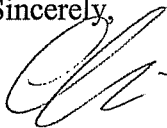
My name is Alan Cobo-Lewis, and I am from Orono. I am testifying Neither For Nor Against Part MM of LD 499.

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

**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.

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.



Maine School Superintendents Association

"Better Schools for Maine Students"

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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 BALDACCII'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.



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 Bapst 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
Gould Academy
(207) 824-7700

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

David Hurst
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.

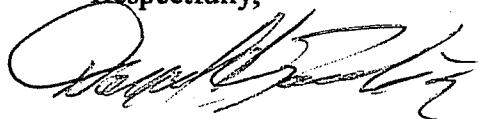
School choice is available to students who live in communities that do not have a public high school. Maine's **10 town academies**, some of which date back to the 1790s, serve these communities, and, in fact, they have infused an approximate \$25,000,000 in **private funds** into their buildings and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

An assumption by some lawmakers is that school choice will continue for students who attend any independent school that currently receives public tuition students. This mistake is based on the Department of Education's original revised Section MM to The Maine Education and School Statues referencing private schools with which a school administrative unit has or enters into a "contract". Not all independent schools receiving public tuition students are contracting schools, but those that are members of The Maine Association of Independent Schools are all approved for tuition and they are all accredited by The New England Association of Schools and Colleges. Further, their greatest accountability lies in the fact that if they do not provide highly satisfactory services, their students and parents have a choice of choosing a different school.

Although the numerous plans for redistricting vary, no plan protects school choice for students attending the non-contracting academies, and those that currently do contract become at risk of the same unprotected fate once their contract periods expire. I ask that regardless of what proposal passes for the restructure of schools and districts, you write into legislation wording that protects school choice for students who attend non-contracting and contracting independent schools approved for tuition. In addition I propose that you consider school choice across district lines for all Maine students so that they and their families may better benefit from the school that best meets their individual needs and interests. Ultimately, competition to draw students would improve schools and Maine's education system.

Both the Education and Appropriations Committees must be aware of Maine's independent schools and their very significant positive impact on the state's education budget and on the services and resources that we provide publicly funded students. In closing, I again urge you to write into legislation wording that protects school choice for students who attend non-contracting and contracting independent schools.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Donald Poulin', written in a cursive style.

**Donald Poulin
Headmaster
Erskine Academy**

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
4 Charles Street
Machias, ME 04654

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.

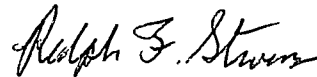
These are a few ideas for savings that come to mind without the wholesale dismantling of our present system:

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.

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

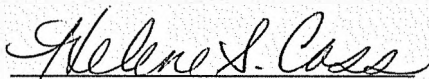
---districts that serve the optimal and efficient number of 3000-4000 students be created, while allowing school districts at or near that size to remain intact. Specifically, the documents states:

“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 commonsense 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
Eliot Maine 03903 (20) 457-0319
hscass@yahoo.com

Testimony introducing LD #370

Resolve, To Reduce the Number of School Administrative Units and Gain Administrative Efficiencies

Good morning, I am Karl Turner of Senate District #11 which is comprised of seven communities in Cumberland County: Chebeague Island, Cumberland, Falmouth, Gray, Long Island, North Yarmouth, and Yarmouth. I am pleased to offer LD #370 for your consideration.

This legislation creates a committee of eleven members comprised of two former legislators, eight former members of the education community including teachers, principals, superintendents all with rural and suburban experience as well as a former Commissioner of Education and a former State Board of Education member. The eleventh member, who would chair the committee, would be a former CEO of a publicly traded company headquartered in Maine.

The committee is charged to develop a consolidated school administration plan working with the following parameters:

- A. All SAUs would be abolished on the effective date of this resolve. This would include CSDs, Career and Technical Regions, Municipal School Units, SADs, School Unions, special school districts, union schools, and any other municipal or quasi municipality responsible for operating schools. The plan does NOT displace teachers or students and does not close any schools.
- B. The plan must consolidate administrative functions, duties, and personnel. The plan must provide and the committee shall determine boundaries for new school administrative units.
 1. The average SAU must be in the range of 2000 – 2200 students
 2. Each SAU must either be a municipal school district or a new SAD.
- C. Each SAU must have a school board of up to nine members. The committee shall determine boundaries for school board seats based on population so that school boards provide proportional representation.
- D. The committee's plan shall include a statewide business entity and regional business entities to further the consolidation of administrative functions. The statewide entity would provide services and perform functions such as, but not limited to, payroll. Regional entities, which may be established using the career and technical education regions in existence, would provide services and perform functions on a regional basis such as, but not limited to, purchasing, transportation scheduling and transportation maintenance.

E. The plan to create SAUs must consider transportation patterns; physical proximity and ease of physical connectivity; and increased academic opportunity.

The committee shall submit its plan along with any necessary implementing legislation to Legislature by Dec 3, 2007. Plan implementation would be completed by June 30, 2008. Elections for the new school boards created by the committee would be held on a Statewide election held in June 2008.

Debt incurred by a SAU that exists the day the plan takes effect remains with the municipalities that incurred the debt.

Schools that absorbed into new SAU structures may create school advisory committees to provide advice and counsel to school principals.

Lastly, it is the intent that the plan submitted by the committee become law in substantially the same form as it is submitted.

Thank you.

Desjardins, David

From: ELIZABETH SCHNEIDER [schneidersenate@msn.com]
Sent: Sunday, February 04, 2007 6:37 PM
To: Desjardins, David
Subject: Fw: School Consolidation

David,
Please email and print off a copy for each member of the Education & Cultural Affairs Committee and put it on their desk. Thank you for your assistance.
Best regards,
Senator Elizabeth M. Schneider
District 30

WEB
schneidersenate.com

207 866-7359-Land
207 852-2716-Cell

Maine Senate District 30
Alton, Argyle, Bradford, Edinburg, Enfield, Greenbush, Howland, Hudson,
Kingman, LaGrange, Lee, Lincoln, Mattawamkeag, Maxfield, Old Town, Orono, Passadumkeag,
Penobscot Indian Island, Springfield, Twombly, Veazie, Webster, Winn

----- Original Message -----

From: ELIZABETH SCHNEIDER
To: rdblanch@localnet.com ; repduprey@hotmail.com ; debraplowman@cs.com ; [Anne Deschesne](mailto:Anne.Deschesne)
Cc: [Peggy Rotundo](mailto:Peggy.Rotundo) ; SenJohn.Martin@legislature.maine.gov ; KwTurner@yahoo.com ;
RepJeremy.Fischer@legislature.maine.gov ; mcraven@midmaine.com ; jmills@mainelegal.net ; [Emily Cain](mailto:Emily.Cain) ;
[Linda Valentino](mailto:Linda.Valentino) ; RepDavid.Webster@legislature.maine.gov ; SawinMillett@aol.com ;
patricksaflood@adelphia.net ; RepJohn.Robinson@legislature.maine.gov ; jaynegiles@email.com ; [Sue Gendron](mailto:Sue.Gendron) (Commissioner Gendron) ; governor@state.me.us
Sent: Sunday, February 04, 2007 6:35 PM
Subject: Re: School Consolidation

Anne,
Thank you for sharing your work with me and your thoughtful comments. I think they are important comments and I am forwarding them along to the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee, Appropriations and Financial Affairs Committee, the Governor, and the Commissioner of Education.

Thank you again for taking the time to email this information and your input to me. FYI see below

Sincerely,

Elizabeth M. Schneider

Maine State Senator

District 30

Maine Senate District 30

Alton, Argyle, Bradford, Edinburg, Enfield, Greenbush, Howland, Hudson,
Kingman, LaGrange, Lee, Lincoln, Mattawamkeag, Maxfield, Old Town, Orono,
Passadumkeag, Penobscot Indian Island, Springfield, Twombly, Veazie, Webster, Winn

207 866-7359-Land
207 852-2716-Cell

FYI

Area Legislator Forum

Legislators confirmed to attend

**Senator Elizabeth M. Schneider, Representative Richard Blanchard, Representative Emily Cain,
Representative Robert Duchesne, Representative Michael Dunn, Representative Benjamin Pratt**

Who for? Senate District 30 residents and other surrounding community residents from towns such as Milford, Eddington and Bradley.

District 30

**Alton, Argyle, Bradford, Edinburg, Enfield, Greenbush, Howland, Hudson,
Kingman, LaGrange, Lee, Lincoln, Mattawankeag, Maxfield, Old Town, Orono,
Passadumkeag, Penobscot Indian Island, Springfield, Twombly, Veazie, Webster, Winn**

Why? To share your thoughts, ideas and concerns on the issue of the Local Schools Regional Support plan proposed by the Governor and other education administration plans that are being offered.

When Friday, February 9, 2007

Time? 6-8pm

Hosted by? Old Town High School, 203 Stillwater Ave. Old Town, in the gym.

Need additional information? Contact Superintendent David Walker, 827-7171 or Senator Schneider's aide

Darek Grant 287-1515.

Also to sign up for email updates contact my legislative aide at (207) 287-1515 for more information.

As always, I will work for what is best for this district and state. I am proud to maintain an open door policy and I am available to hear any of your thoughts, concerns and input. It is important that we all work together and do what is best for our community.

----- Original Message -----

2/6/2007

From: Anne Deschesne
To: rdblanch@localnet.com ; schneidersenate@msn.com ; repduprey@hotmail.com ; debraplowman@cs.com
Sent: Sunday, February 04, 2007 1:14 PM
Subject: School Consolidation

Dear Esteemed Legislator;

As the Business Manager for the Old Town School Department and as a resident of Newburgh, I would like to weigh in on an aspect of the Governor's plan for school consolidation. With almost 17 years of experience (in Old Town and M.S.A.D. 22) in all aspects of the business and finance arenas of Maine schools, I have insight into what a project of such magnitude would involve.

I don't believe many are dismissing this concept completely and it may be that the time has come to take action on this much-studied area. In order to accomplish this however, a sensible timeline with incentives as well as disincentives for school units should be put in place. Huge logistical and conceptual projects such as this must be well-thought out, well-planned and involve input from all stakeholders. To attempt to pull this off in less than eighteen months will create a disaster of major proportions for the State of Maine.

Although I have many concerns regarding this plan, I will expand on just one of them at this time - the three states which the Governor has stated that his proposal for school consolidation are modeled on - Arkansas, Delaware and Maryland. On the Department of Education website, there is a section that responds to many questions and concerns regarding the Governor's plan. Two in particular caught my eye. Please examine the following questions & answers - taken directly from the DOE webpage:

Q: "How will the Governor's proposal address the demographic differences within the new LSRS?"

A: "This initiative does not employ a one-size-fits-all model. Each region will determine who best to organize its central office and provide leadership and services. Adequate, full-staffed transition teams hired and paid for by the state Department of Education, with experience in legal, data, facilitation and other areas will assist regions in developing a new structure, and provide models from successful districts around the country for the new regions to work with. In addition, the DOE will already have in hand for the transition teams and regional boards extensive data about each district, its teacher contracts, various calendars and organizational structures and so on so the teams can begin work immediately. While the timetable is aggressive, businesses do it all the time. And the state of Arkansas restructured its school system administrations in three months! It can be done." (emphasis mine)

Another question / answer:

Q: "The Commissioner has explained that models from other states and/or provinces were used in the development of this proposed initiative. Which states and/or provinces were used as models?"

A: "Delaware, New Brunswick, Canada, Arkansas, Maryland. As an example, Delaware has 119,000 students and 22 school districts, ranging from about 1,000 to 19,000 students."

I'd like to take issue with the first question / answer. The last sentence implies that Arkansas reorganized their school systems in a similar way in three months. Quite frankly, I found that hard to believe, so I did a little research. On the Arkansas Department of Education's website, they list almost 250 separate school departments with as many superintendents and central office staffs. They do have "Educational Learning Cooperatives" - 15 of them, encompassing the entire state. Delving a little deeper into these Co-ops, I found that: 1) membership by school departments is voluntary; 2) they act as a liaison between the school departments and the DOE; and 3) they have their own separate locations, directors and office staff. This does not resemble our Governor's proposal at all.

I then called the Benton, Arkansas School Department - a school system with over 4500 students and a budget of \$22M. After speaking with personnel in the Curriculum Director's office, I learned other interesting facts. Arkansas HAS NOT restructured their entire school system in three months. In fact, Benton didn't know what I was talking about in that regard. What they have been directed to do is to consolidate their smallest school departments into larger, neighboring school departments on a voluntary basis. Arkansas was having difficulty with students living in small, rural areas receiving instruction that would enable them to meet the State Learning Standards. These students were also interested in receiving services that some small communities are unable to offer - sports, advanced placement courses, expanded electives, etc. The smaller systems need to ask the larger systems to take them on. It is the larger system's choice as to whether or not to do so. They say this undertaking concerns a very few number of pupils overall.

Also, the Educational Learning Cooperatives seem to be a real help to the member school systems. The Board of Directors is made up of the Superintendents in the Region that wish to belong. The Co-Ops serve as facilitators for areas such as professional development, developing in-service activities, tracking certification, implementing the Highly Qualified Teacher plan and consolidating some purchasing. They also ensure that the State's computerized educational data system (similar to our MEDMS) is implemented in a uniform and consistent manner as well as provide training in this system. Actually, it sounds like the introduction and/or expansion of such a system in Maine would be a worthwhile idea. (Our area already has something similar, on a smaller scale - the Penobscot River Educational Partnership - this organization is a collaborative effort of several school departments in our area to provide streamlined and cost-effective delivery of many services, from purchasing and professional development to psychological testing).

Most interesting though was the assurance by the Benton School System in Arkansas that 200+ school systems in Arkansas still have their own Superintendents, Curriculum Coordinators, Special Ed Directors, Business Managers and other supporting central office staffs. In summary, Arkansas is NOT the model for Maine that it has been purported to be.

The other two states referenced by the Governor are Delaware and Maryland. The simple fact that geographically, comparing these two states (even combined) to the area of Maine makes a comparison of school systems difficult. When adding the population differences to the equation, these two states seem even more unlikely to be good models for Maine.

Delaware, geographically the size of Penobscot County, is divided into 19 School Departments. As the Maine DOE website correctly states, these range in student population from 1,000 to almost 20,000. Judging by the Delaware DOE website, these school departments seem very well-organized and well-thought-out. Examining the structure of these 19 school departments, one finds that even the smallest (Delmar - enrollment 1,071), which has just two schools (roughly the size of Old Town's middle and high schools), are located very close together. The largest school system (Christina - enrollment 19,236) has 24 schools but the majority (18) are located in Newark with the remainder in Wilmington - again, a very close geographical entity. To make a meaningful comparison, imagine moving 75% of the Maine population to Penobscot County and then dividing it into 19 school systems. That makes sense - why would we need 200+ in an area that small? Conversely, it doesn't make sense to group an area as large as Maine into that few a number of school departments. To summarize, I don't believe Maine should look to Delaware as a model for a school consolidation plan. The significant geographic differences between these two states cannot be ignored.

Maryland is 5 times larger than Delaware but has almost 7 times the population - their population being even more geographically dense than Delaware. Maryland has 24 school departments ranging in size from 2,500 to 167,000 students. The larger ones have huge, multi-layered organizational structures that rival that of a State government. Most are in the "mid-range" of 20,000-60,000 students. Again, the boundaries of these school systems, because the state is 1/3 the size of Maine, are much smaller than those proposed for Maine. Maryland, being dissimilar to Maine in terms of geography and population, would make an interesting model to study (how effective is instruction with student populations of 20,000+ to a district?), this urban solution should not be a model for the comparatively rural state of Maine.

Granted, I have only conducted the most preliminary of research and just touched on some simple, basic differences. However, I believe it to be misleading of the Governor to imply that his strategy is working in exact or even similar form in these other states. Each state is extremely different and must create their own plan for consolidation, taking into account their inherently different factors.

I hope you will take this information into account when considering the Governor's plan at the Legislative level. As I stated at the beginning of this letter, there are many, many details involved in a project of this magnitude and I really don't think the Governor and his team have thought this through in its entirety. If this gets pushed through, I believe there is a real probability that we will spend the next five years, at least, untangling the problems created by eighteen months of rushing. I'm sure we'd all agree that that time and energy would be better spent on the actual education of our children.

Respectfully,
Anne Deschesne

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MAINE

PRINCIPALS'

ASSOCIATION



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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.

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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TESTIMONY REGARDING LEGISLATIVE PROPOSALS RELATIVE TO SCHOOL
ADMINISTRATIVE CONSOLIDATION PROPOSALS AND

OTHER RELATED ISSUES

123RD LEGISLATURE

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 SIDNEY PEW AND I AM A RESIDENT OF THE TOWN OF ANDOVER, A SCHOOL BOARD MEMBER OF SAD #44 FOR THE LAST 14 YEARS AND CHAIRMAN OF ITS FINANCE AND NEGOTIATIONS COMMITTEES.

WHILE I SUPPORT EFFORTS TO REGIONALIZE AND CONSOLIDATE, THE GOVERNOR'S PLAN MOVES MUCH TOO QUICKLY. IT IS A TOP DOWN APPROACH BUT MOST OF ALL LACKS INPUT FROM ALL OF MAINE CITIZENS ESPECIALLY STUDENTS, PARENTS, SCHOOL PERSONNEL AND SCHOOL BOARDS, THE PARTIES THAT WILL BE MOST EFFECTED BY ANY PLAN.

A BETTER PLAN AVAILABLE FROM THE *MAINE HERITAGE POLICY CENTER* ENVISIONS AND RECOMMENDS EDUCATION SERVICE DISTRICTS. IT ACHIEVES SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION COST SAVINGS WHILE MAINTAINING LOCAL CONTROL.

OTHER STUDIES AND REPORTS INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO THE *BROOKINGS INSTITUTION "CHARTING MAINE'S FUTURE"* STATE THAT THE OPTIMUM DISTRICT SIZE IS BETWEEN 3000-4000 STUDENTS, MOST OF THE GOVERNOR'S PROPOSED DISTRICTS ARE MUCH LARGER WHICH WOULD NEGATE LOCAL CONTROL AND PARENT INVOLVEMENT.

ANY PLAN NEEDS TO MAKE SURE THAT ALL SCHOOL PROPERTY FROM ANY REALIGNMENT IS REQUIRED TO BE TRANSFERRED TO THE NEW DISTRICTS. EDUCATION COMMISSIONER GENDRON HAS PUBLICLY STATED THAT IT IS NOT THE INTENT TO CLOSE ANY SCHOOLS BUT IN THE GOVERNOR'S PLAN *SECTION MM-116 NUMBER 1 BOARD OF DIRECTORS* IT STATES "THE NEW REGIONAL BOARD OF DIRECTORS SHALL DETERMINE WHAT SCHOOL PROPERTIES...IS NECESSARY TO CARRY OUT THE FUNCTIONS OF THE

REGIONAL COMMUNITY". UNDER THIS WORDING IT WOULD BE POSSIBLE FOR THE NEW REGIONAL BOARDS TO NOT REQUEST THE PROPERTIES OF SMALL SCHOOLS, BY DEFAULT POSSIBLY CLOSING THAT SCHOOL. I LIVE IN A SMALL TOWN AND LIKE MANY SMALL TOWNS IN THE STATE IT IS CENTERED ON ITS SCHOOL. CLOSING ANY SCHOOL SHOULD NOT BE PART OF ANY PLAN EITHER BY STATUE OR UNINTENTIONALLY.

IN THE GOVERNOR'S PLAN ALSO IN *SECTION MM-116 NUMBER 3 FINANCING ASSUMED DEBTS* "A REGIONAL LEARNING BOARD OF DIRECTORS IS NOT REQUIRED TO ASSUME OUTSTANDING INDEBTEDNESS...FOR NONSTATE FUNDED PROJECTS. AN EXAMPLE OF THIS IS THE WATER AND SEWER PROJECT INSTALLED AT TELSTAR REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL AND FINANCED ALL WITH LOCAL MONEY. IN ANY PLAN ALL DEBT THAT IS RELATED TO THE INFRASTRUCTURE OF EXISTING SCHOOL BUILDINGS NEEDS TO BE ASSUMED BY ANY NEW DISTRICTS.

ON FEBRUARY 1, 2007, EDUCATION COMMISSIONER GENDRON TOLD THE AUDIENCE AT MOUNTAIN VALLEY MIDDLE SCHOOL THAT THIS YEAR'S ED281 WHICH SHOWS THE SUBSIDY AMOUNT THE STATE ALLOCATES UNDER THE ESSENTIAL PROGRAMS AND SERVICES FORMULA WILL BE AVAILABLE THE END OF THIS WEEK AND THAT FOLOWING WEEK A ED281 WOULD BE AVAILABLE SHOWING WHAT THE SUBSIDY WOULD LOOK LIKE UNDER THE GOVERNOR'S PLAN IF THE 26 NEW REGIONS WERE IN EXISTENCE NOW. HOPEFULLY THESE REGIONAL ED281S WILL BE ON TIME SO WE CAN SEE THE FINANCIAL IMPACT THE PLAN WOULD HAVE ON EVERY TOWN IN THE STATE. IT WOULD BE IMPOSSIBLE AND UNCONSCIONABLE OF THE LEGISLATURE TO MAKE ANY JUDGEMENT ON ANY PLAN UNTIL SOLID FIGURES AS TO THE FINANCIAL IMPACT ARE AVAILABLE FOR ALL TO SEE.

PLEASE KNOW THAT I, LIKE MOST MAINE CITIZENS, WANT TO WORK WITH YOU TO DEVEOP A PLAN THAT BEST MEETS THE EDUCATIONAL NEEDS OF ALL STUDENTS.

MSAD #22 BOARD OF DIRECTORS OPPOSES THE ADMINISTRATION'S PLAN TO CONSOLIDATE SCHOOL UNITS

On Wednesday, January 24, 2007, the MSAD #22 Board of Directors voted unanimously to endorse the Maine School Boards Association's opposition to the Administration's school unit consolidation plan, Local Schools, Regional Support. Although the Board, which represents the towns of Newburgh, Winterport and Hampden, expressed support for reasoned and well thought-out consolidation, it concluded the Administration's plan would destabilize the educational system in the district. While we wish to acknowledge that this Administration has championed causes that have benefited our district, we respectfully submit the following comments.

The Administration's plan sacrifices local control and parental involvement in favor of a large bureaucracy. The three towns that make up MSAD #22 would be lumped together with 29 other communities in the Bangor-area. With a limit of fifteen directors for the new 32-town mega-district, it is assured that more than half of the towns would not have a representative on the board. Parents who can now impact educational policy and programming by calling on their neighbors and friends who are board members - people they often see at the local grocery store, would have to compete with tens of thousands of other citizens to have their voices heard. Parents and other community members keep schools focused on student achievement.

The proposed plan diminishes the role of parents and the local communities, thereby reducing local control and accountability. It forces districts to consolidate despite their level of administrative efficiency. The Governor's 2004 Efficiency and Equity Task Force shows a wide variation in the percent of education dollars spent on school and system administration among school districts. It makes no sense to force consolidation on districts that are already achieving administrative efficiencies. That is especially true where MSAD #22 has been recognized as one of four "High Performing/Moderate Cost" school districts in Maine.

The MSAD #22 Board is not opposed to consolidation. Rather, it believes we should consider alternatives to the Administration's that maintain high levels of student achievement, keep parents and communities involved, and at the same time achieve meaningful cost savings. Such alternatives should encourage, but not coerce, schools and communities to rethink how they provide education services.

The MSAD #22 Board believes the greatest cost-savings can be achieved through efficient delivery of business services. For the last several years MSAD #22 has belonged to the Penobscot River Educational Partnership ("PREP"), a collaboration which includes nine school districts, United Technologies Center, Child Development Services of Penobscot County and the University of Maine. This innovative partnership focuses primarily on achieving greater effectiveness and efficiency in our schools. Districts can achieve significant cost-savings by sharing administrative and management services through such partnerships.

To that end, the MSAD #22 Board supports examining consolidation in a methodical and measurable way. The standard by which any educational policy should be measured is whether it is in the best interests of students. Before drastic changes are made, we should ensure those changes will not have a negative impact on student learning and achievement. The Administration's plan, so far as the MSAD #22 Board can tell, has not been measured against this standard.

Finally, in the 2005 State of State Address, the Governor stated that Maine should "provide world-class education to young students and older workers alike," and that "we must embrace innovation and entrepreneurship in our schools and workplaces." These are admirable goals with which the Board agrees.

This proposed plan is wrong for our district. It does not ensure a better education for students. By creating large mega-districts, it squelches innovative and entrepreneurial efforts such as the PREP. For these reasons, we oppose Local Schools, Regional Support.

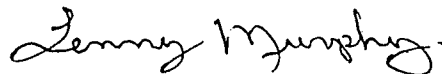
A new approach to the procedure that takes place at a public hearing, when Joint Standing Committees are hearing the public.

The written procedure put forward to the public is proper, but the procedure has broke down and is not being properly delegated! When no other sponsors wish to testify, the presiding chair should invite, as stated, the members of the public to speak, and not allow continued testimony from sometimes several state officials. First of all, if state employees do speak, it should be briefly, and pass in their written testimony that can be read by legislatures at a later date when it's not taking of the public time to elaborate on the issues, if they can stay long enough to speak at all!

When state employees speak in opposition to the publics' interest it makes unneeded controversy! State employees would be better heard and understood at a work shop. But if the people don't show up for a public hearing, which is so often the case, the bill could be discussed as if in a workshop, saving much time and money for many! If a state employee does speak on behalf of the state, then the public should be able to ask them a couple of questions, so the legislature can get a better view of the issues from more than one side. Sometimes the people can ask a more informative question of a state official than the Joint Committee. And any time spent by state officials, who have set opinions, further divides themselves from the public, and there again, when the public can't ask questions of state employees at a public hearing, it further complicates the issues the legislature are trying to properly judge!

Also it would be totally reasonable to have a psychologists on the Governor's and the Legislator's staff, to help more deeply evaluate important issues that effect the people of the State of Maine or any state in the country!

Truly yours,
Lenny Murphy



4/4/99

A new realistic procedure to bring a bill forward to our Maine Legislature! Most bills should be brought to the people, if not from the people, on a local basis first, by our Legislatures! About 80% of the new bills could be studied and worked through on a local basis. Then if the bill goes forward, with 1,000 signatures, the legislative committee wouldn't have to research everything themselves. Because state legislators should have already talked to appropriate state agencies to understand the impact of the new bill!

The other 20% of the new bills could be handled in the normal ways because they would be relating to the areas of technology, that the average people have little knowledge of, or when bills are to be repealed!

Legislators should get together and work on cutting down the number of bills that are redundant or similar.

Bills worked on by the people would be less influenced by special interests, lobbyist and out of state interest! Which of course would make our government much more of, by, and for truly for the people!

All bills effecting more than 20% of the people, if voted on by all the people, would also be more representative of and by the people, and even fewer bills would be brought forward as a result.

Bills developed in this fashion would be more detailed and sensitive to all of the people's needs, and very important as well, it would drastically reduce the number of bills brought forward now! Giving more time to properly research bills the way they should be researched!

Truly yours,
Lenny Murphy



April 4, 1999.



STATE OF MAINE
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
23 STATE HOUSE STATION
AUGUSTA, MAINE
04333-0023

JOHN ELIAS BALDACCI
GOVERNOR

SUSAN A. GENDRON
COMMISSIONER

April 12, 2004

Leonard Murphy
HC 65, Box 5440
Lincoln, ME 04457

Dear Mr. Murphy:

Governor Baldacci requested that I respond to your recent letter regarding your concerns with the *Learning Results*. These statements of student learning outcomes were developed over several years in the mid to late 1990s using a process that involved hundreds of Maine citizens, parents, businessmen and women, teachers, and administrators. Though the resulting document may appear to be overwhelming in the number of performance indicators students and teachers must attend to over the years, those who drafted the standards wanted to be certain the *Learning Results* captured the essential knowledge and skills required of all citizens to be successful in the 21st Century. In the past, curriculum documents were created at the local level and in most instances contained similar statements of learning outcomes. They rarely saw the light of day, however, except when presented at school board meetings for approval. What the *Learning Results*, as a State document, strives to achieve is to make visible a *common* set of standards for all Maine students.

I agree with your view, however, that standards can in some cases represent a challenge to effective classroom practice. Teachers and administrators must ensure that the standards are embedded in a system of other best practices. Standards by themselves will not produce the outcomes we seek. The Maine Department of Education will continue to work hard to ensure that support and assistance are provided to teachers across Maine as they develop well-rounded educational programs that incorporate the standards.

Thank you for contacting Governor Baldacci.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Susan A. Gendron".

Susan A. Gendron
Commissioner of Education

To: John Baldacci, The Governor of The State of Maine.

Good day John, hope you are feeling much better today? I know you went through a difficult time, glad you are on track again! Hope we can help to get the State back on track again?! Maine's public schools, through the so-called Learning Results, have become State schools! Now that Maine has had a bad taste from the Federal School Program, it's time to streamline our so-called, Governor King's Learning Results Dictations!! Oh that's right, I did get Governor King to reconsider, and he did remove his name, and legacy, from the controversial mandatory dictations of the Learning Results!! John, just like your accident, the 200,000 students in this State are sliding down the Learning Results slippery highway, and their own Teachers can't properly direct them which way to go!! A lot of the students will be overturned by this primitive thoughtless system, with absolutely no realism or compassion built in!! The teachers are not given the exact materials that The so-called, State demands that the students know!?? It's like the State giving the Teachers pieces of the puzzle, but that makes an incomplete picture for The Students! We did not hide any of the ABC's, so why, when we want to teach them, would we not give the teachers exactly what they need to teach the young people just what The State dictates that they all know!?? It's like teaching them to work on a gas motor and then when they take a text they are tested on a diesel motor!! The State's text makes them swing blindly at the carrot, the teachers are not happy, and the parents and students have lost Their pursuit of happiness and Their freedom of choice!! The Program is in violation of our Maine Constitution to keep the People from the heavy burden of Unfunded Mandates!!!! Where the Learning Results are clearly unfunded mandates and unconstitutional at this time, I expect something to be done about it, and I will offer my free services to rectify the serious problems at hand!!

What needs to be done at this point is simple, give the teachers the material that The State thinks all The Students in Maine have to know, then let the teachers text The Students on a regular basis, then the teacher, and The State, can see that they know all the trivial rhetoric the State thinks is important!! Then let them go in their areas of interest, or otherwise we will not have life long learners, we, for the most part, will have State dictated puppets that stay in school, mostly, to play primitive head butting sports that the school or university is demanding of them for some primitive materialist Gold Ball!?? To tax anyone so the baseball, or hockey team, can go to another State to practice is taxation without representation, clear and simple!! Let people pay the full price if they want to train their child in school and collage, fair is fair!! Or let professional sports have their own college, or pay for all the insurance and coaches and fuel, etc. in public schools and collage relating to sports!! Why should we pay to train young athletes and set back and watch while their injuries escalate!!

A simple "New Solution" is conceivable!! Let parents of collage students, or professional sports, pay for the full cost of the student's sport related activity! Fair is fair, capitalism not communism please!! And with the public schools the "New Solution" is even easier!! Just put sports back where it used to be, in the town with the town's people, just like Little League Baseball when I was a kid! Let the town's athletic dept. expand a little and it will save a lot! Let the parents coach the kids, if we must? We do not need collage level coaches getting big money from training young kids to butt hands and win some Gold Ball!! To competitive and to costly for our own good!!! If we put more money into Education, the way it is set up today, they will surly hire better coaches for some primitive Canadian or European head butting sport and not microscopes!!

Time to take a serious look, with the blinders off!! Mostly we must offer these New Solutions and not make more mandatory dictations!! Our government is supposed to be For The People, and not just in the business of making dictations to impose upon the people!!

We need new jobs, so the students, and our system, must have the flexibility to help the young people learn to help themselves into the constantly changing times!!

The Learning Results are in front of us, now that we have the 1,300 dictations plus, if we pass them on, like the ABC's, to the State qualified teachers we will no longer be in need of the Department of Learning Results, although it's kind of cute that no one is in charge, or should I say no one wants to be responsible for the Learning Results!! Once I told the Attorney General's Office, etc., that The State would be liable when young people drop out of school early, or commit suicide because of the added pressures of the unprecedented mandatory dictations of the so-called Learning Results, no one wanted responsibility!! Governor King took his name off, and The State made all School Board Members in The State sign a paper saying they except the Learning Results!! But this does not wash The States hands in my book, and a change of the dictations of the Learning Results must come about!! The change will inspire the teachers and the Students, and millions of needed dollars will be put to much better uses!! Hope we can talk about this brief speech in person, maybe over dinner sometime?! Lets take on the challenge to see what opportunities we can offer the next generations, and not add to the many obstacles we have put in front of our neighbors and ourselves!! We must learn to become governors and not dictators, our futures depend on it! I will add a copy of the Learning Program I developed several years ago and submitted to the State, etc. It will help outline what is needed to help the young people truly develop self-confidence in a troubled time on our primitive little planet!!

Truly yours,

Lenny Murphy. HC 65 Box 5440 Lincoln, Maine 04457 1-207-746-9212

P.S. Maine has a law on the books that directs the State Departments to promote Hydropower, please enforce this law!! The more clean power we can make will mean that much less pollution that will fall on us from high sulfur coal burning States!

Also, when a volcano erupts it darkens and cools off the earth! So now that we have cleaned up a lot of the pollution and are keeping the forest from burning around the world, etc., it has helped to clean up the air and let more light in to warm the earth! To clean is not natural, and we are going into the next Ice Age, so should we want it warmer??!! Please don't let the people that say the sky is falling have any more influence over you now that you are back in Maine doing the business of The People of The State of Maine!

I will go further and theorize that the burning of the vegetation on the planet, at peaks of growth, cools the earth enough to bring on The Ice Ages!! Then when the atmosphere cleans up, because there is nothing to burn in the affected area, it will warm up and things will flourish again!! A natural cycle I would say!!

Now that fewer people are working in the State it is a ideal time to promote Home Schooling!! Give the parents something from the town, and the State, and the towns and the State would still save millions to have a smarter person!! Sounds like a plan to me!!

February 4, 2007

To The Committee of Education and Cultural Affairs:

I am here today acting as a representative, and informally a lawyer, for the people of the State of Maine. I will be writing a short version of my thoughts at this time. I will submit testimony that will give insight into the type of educational policies that we need to consider for the future of all students everywhere. At this time I will briefly prove the conspiracy behind the obvious takeover of our public schools, and how the obvious attempts to take over our complete administration and local school boards to continue the unlawful implementation of the so-called "Learning Results". John Baldacci, the present governor of The State of Maine, is invading our public schools in the same way George Bush invaded Iraq! In the same way the reports were twisted to meet George Bush's needs to go to war, and only one side of the issue was considered appropriately, he went blindly forward! John, on the other hand, by picking up the previous policies of education has stacked the deck to bring the new institutions forward even though they were not the wishes of the people. John stacked the deck when he chose the panel for the Board of Education's committee. John has stacked the deck in more than several areas that do not need to be discussed or brought forward at this time.

Moving on to Susan Gendron, she has continually conspired, along with John, to bring the unfounded mandates and proven harsh cruelties of the un-funded mandates of the Learning Results forward.

Committee Members I ask you now, do you want students to continue suffering from feelings of inadequacy and lowered self-esteem? The tests relating to the Learning Results and the Federal Governments "No Child Left Behind" are causing such hardships for the teachers that they are all rebelling. By spending far too much time teaching for the test, the teachers and students are having less time to achieve the proper education goals that the Learning Results first attempted to implement, which is that they can all learn at a much higher rate!

I have outlined the only proper conceivable approach to achieve these goals the legislature is demanding. Briefly, because I have submitted written testimony, a method that inquires into a student's interest, in any subject area, that will expand their comprehension of the subject matter that they are interested in learning about! By getting them interested in what should be their education, not The States education, will bring up their comprehension level, and only then can they, on their own, learn at a much increased rate with the assistance of proper mentors around them, guiding them, not dictating to them!

We need the community, obviously, to teach our young, and not allow the One-Parent-State to teach all that they feel is relevant.

Committee members, do you wish to take away our freedom of choice from the students and from their parents? Do we or do we not have a pursuit of happiness to go along with our freedom of choice? Is this or is this not America, where we fought from oppression more than once?

Approximately two years ago, when the teachers of Maine showed up at a public hearing to voice their disapproval of the Learning Results, Senator Mitchell should have stayed to hear all the teacher's complaints! When the only female teacher came forward that did not sob throughout the testimony, she stated that she was mad, and she began to explain why the State had no legal right to come in and impose hardships on the public schools and on the students and parents in several different ways! Because the Committee of Education and Cultural Affairs were mostly responsible for imposing these flames, Senator Mitchell should have at least stayed to take the heat of the fire that they were responsible for making. The teachers suffered for years helping The State impose hardships on the students of the State of Maine! Please don't make any more fuel for this educational fire!

We are stuck in a primitive mode of competition, or should I say a conspiracy, to dismantle our public school systems from top to bottom. At this time, Committee Members, you can, with our help, bring back, at this time, local control on every level.

To address some of Susan Gendron's statements, where she compares Maine to The State of Delaware, only to exploit her viewpoints, is like comparing apples and oranges. First of all the State of Maine is a much colder state, and a more rural state than most states, and should not, and it is not rational to compare Maine to other states just to justify her premises to take over our public schools, it's administrations, and all freedom of speech related to this suppression of local control. Secondly, just because some students are doing a little better in Delaware, because teachers are teaching for the test, does not mean that they have a better education or know anything relevant. Does anyone know if the dropout rate in Delaware has increased because of the suppressive system? Do you or we, know anything about Delaware other than what we have been told? Are you blinded by the light Committee Members, I would hope not? Free the people from this suppression and anarchy!

Committee members, by following the lead of John Baldacci, in his attempt to take over the present structure of our public schools, it is not far from becoming a dictator! It is apparent, because of his skilled maneuvering, he has you jumping on board and developing legislation to take over the authority and education of the public schools of the State of Maine! Please don't let a dictator's fever come over you all, as he wishes, the primitive controlling tactics have not impressed the people of the State of Maine! We are throwing out the baby with the bathwater!

It looks like it's easy to see that there could be many political leaders voted out of office on this issue when they get back home and can't justify their actions and/or fever!

Maybe it's time, as it has been suggested by state legislators, that the people of Maine put a bill forward to keep our local sales taxes to fully fund our schools! Then we can apply to The State to become private schools. This may be our answer to your suppression of little children that need attention not domination in the areas of what should be their education, not The State's.

We must avoid class structuring, which will happen if we have two graduation certificates! If you would like to hear more of my reasons why the governor's plan is unlawful, you can contact Sara Foster at the Attorney General's office! I believe she recorded over one half hour of my explaining, in detail, the scheming maneuverings of John and Susan to take over control of our public schools! Their offering's for a new school structuring is an obstruction of justice to say the least!

Thinking outside of the box has somehow become a positive statement. Susan Gendron told me, at a meeting I had with her, that she liked me because I thought outside of the box! Once I thought about it, it made no sense, the new structure that is being brought forward does think outside of the box, and that is the problem with it! When it comes to education, only common sense and thinking within the normal parameters should be recommended not mandated.

One point that needs to be brought forward is that if we move to a ratio of 17 students to one teacher, it will cause to lay off close to 4,000 teachers in the next five years, not the 2,867 teachers that would be laid off if the Board of Educations recommendations of 15 students to one teacher was adhered to!

A lot of small communities only have one Science teacher, one English teacher, and one History teacher, at the Junior High level and the High School level. So when one of the teachers quits because of the forced Learning Results or other reasons, the communities, apparently, will not be able to hire someone in their place. So are you, Committee Members, willing to come in and teach the Science class or History or English to make up for the teachers that have been lost due to the so called attrition! If the communities wish to hire back the teachers that have been lost so that normal teaching positions can be held, then the structure of the system, as written, will make every teacher hired an additional financial burden on the communities, therefore equaling unfunded mandates. When the governor lists unrealistic cuts in the teaching positions in the State of Maine, it is equal to unfunded mandates.

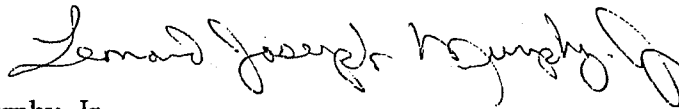
The last, hopefully convincing, evidence I will mention at this time is The State's liability as far as taking over the public schools, as well as, implementing the Learning Results on the teachers and students of the State of Maine. As The State imposes further demands on the communities educational systems they have to realize that their actions are causing enough mental and physical suffering to warrant the people coming to the legislature to ask permission to sue The State because of the negative setbacks the implementation of the Learning Results and the dismantling of the public's structured control over issues that are apparently too sensitive for The State to fathom.

In concluding, I would like to mention that I just don't complain or offer accusations, I have written many new solutions to bring our education systems to a peak of efficiency! About 10 years ago, I developed my own version of the Learning Results, which I call Learning Guidelines, the guiding principals for Maine's teachers. It offers many insights and reasoning's as to why it should be brought forward. I have also added in, for your information, and for a better understanding of how education should be offered, my first and second letters to the present Governor. There is also a letter addressed to me, from Susan Gendron responding because of a letter I sent to Governor Baldacci. The letter from Susan was clearly spun in a direction that was evasive to say the least.

I also added in two paper's I wrote several years ago: 1) A new realistic procedure to bring a bill forward to our legislature! 2) A new approach to the protocol and or procedure that takes place at a public hearing, when joint standing committees are hearing the public.

We must offer the means not the methods to bring about a realistic approach to education! I hope you take time to read the materials I put forward so that no more harm comes to those that have not the ability, nor the capability, within the stifling structure of the Learning Results, to stand and speak for their own interest and futures, or they would have been here today to speak for themselves.

Truly yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Leonard Joseph Murphy, Jr." The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned to the right of the typed name.

Leonard Joseph Murphy, Jr.

STATE OF MAINE

LEARNING GUIDELINES

THE GUIDING PRINCIPALS FOR MAINE'S TEACHERS

These mandates to force the communities to hire additional foreign language teachers are unfunded and unconstitutional according to our State Constitution and the U.S. Constitution.

If we bring Spanish teachers in from Spain who can't speak English then we will be defeating the purpose of trying to communicate to the students a second language! And then we will be holding the students responsible even when the teacher is inadequate to communicate the subject material needed! The teachers, after all, are being paid to do a job. And to some extent the teachers should be held accountable for their teaching or lack of teaching, and not the students!

CURRENT EVENTS

To start with it seems reasonable that all students at the age of 16 should be capable, if interested or not, of voting. It should not be mandatory but by the time they are 16 they should have enough understanding of our system to be able to vote if they so choose! Current Events are extremely important for our children to feel more comfortable when entering society. By teaching them what they need to know about issues dealing with voting they can become more familiar with the needs imposed upon them by society upon graduation. By easing them into our society they will feel more comfortable and capable of fitting in. By imposing all of society's responsibilities upon them at graduation is overwhelming and unjust!

GARDENING AND PRESERVING FOODS

Within the science class gardening and preserving food should be a subject matter of real concern! By helping students to understand the basic principals they will feel more capable to supplement their meager income if our educational structure gives them more valuable abilities to survive in our insensitive capitalistic culture! Besides love, food is the most important substance that we have to deal with on a daily basis. Without giving them these abilities to help themselves we are cutting them short of the abilities they will need to make ends meet.

HEALTH AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION

These two subject areas should continue along the same lines as they have with additional focus on health and well-being.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

These subject areas for the most part should continue as they have in the past. It would be unfortunate for the students and the communities to have to accept the burdens imposed upon them! We should suggest subject matter for them, give them reasons why subject matter may be good for them, but we should not force the whole football team into visual and performing arts when they have no interest or desire or need to learn information relating to the performing arts! By forcing many older students into the performing arts will only discourage their learning interest, and hold back those in the class that are there because they want to learn!

HISTORY

History in several areas should be taught to give them a well rounded picture with all the pieces of the puzzle of history brought out. To include, the history of the American Indians and the history of Religion! It should include discussions about the morals within the Bible. This will give them the basis as how to behave! No test, or judgments, should be made about any student's opinions! And the Bible itself does not allow praying in public! Matthew Chapter 6, Verses 5 through 9.

TRADES

Automobile repair and maintenance and driving. Most people today drive. So most people today should be studying the dangerous object that they will surely spend a good part of their life in! People today need so much more than students years ago! And with inflation the over-charging on everything that may need repair today. It seems we should be helping them to be more self-reliant, so they will have a better chance at making ends meet in the real world today! A diploma today means less and less every year! Especially with the schools trying to get more and more gold balls for their glass trophy case! The students are lucky to get a diploma with their whole body intact and their minds somewhat usable to sustain them in a needy capitalistic culture!

All the trades should be opened up to all students. And not just those in the so called lower ladder of education! We have to give students opportunities in school and not just restrictions, regulations and responsibilities! These are fine but it is our job to give them a chance, opportunities, and direction, so they can have a chance to become the creative and lifelong learner that we would hope they would become if given the proper learning and growing environment! People and or students can only be creative in a creative system and environment. They are both essential!

PSYCHOLOGY

Psychology could be discussed within the framework of science class. Unless the students are taught the basic principals of psychology, there is no way they can understand how society can negatively impact their lifestyle.

By teaching them to self-actualize this will give them the keys they need to understand how peer pressure and television commercials can control and direct them in directions that are misdirected.

SECOND LANGUAGES

All second languages should be completely voluntary! Otherwise, we will be creating major divisions within our society! As we feel inadequate when receiving a prescription from a doctor to give to a pharmacist, so too we will feel and be inadequate when around those speaking a second language when we have no understanding about what they may be talking about! Parents will no longer be able to communicate to their children on the same level, the children will develop a superior attitude with the additional knowledge that has been imposed upon them! Our children today have no intention of going to France to speak french nor can we afford to send our children to France to use the french they have been taught! Our priorities today should be more focused on the students true needs, and not the requirements that the State feels they need.

MUSIC

Music should be continued as it is today. Music is an important part of peoples lives, and should be encouraged up to a certain level within school. At that point their interest should be considered completely.

CAREER PREPARATION

There again this subject area should be slowly looked into on a deeper level! But by forcing all students into career preparation is completely unjust, uncalled for, unnecessary and unfunded. A certain percentage of students today already have a career lined up for themselves, so to force them into career preparation all the way through their senior year is completely unrealistic!

FURTHER OPINIONS

As the Maine Learning Results are set-up now the students and teachers will have to learn 1342 new commandments! The teachers will have to coach all students on all 1342 subject areas before they can even begin to study the subject matter relating to the 1342 new commandments. This will be an extreme strain on the teachers and students, partially because there is no set format, or standards, for what has to be taught, just general guidelines! We cannot develop a test, to test students when we haven't given them proper structure to learn! The teachers will be teaching the commandments, from every possible angle conceivable! And with the State developing a standardized test, to supposedly make the students accountable this can only show the lack of teaching principles put forward. And if a teacher doesn't teach enough material to give the students the general knowledge that the State feels they need then the student, for some reason, will be held accountable, whether their teacher was capable or is capable of teaching the subject matters necessary!

Also it is stated 134 times that the students will learn. It should be stated, as in the front of the Learning Results Draft, what all students should know and be able to do. Why it was changed from should, to will, I will never know! We have to take out all the red flags that disturb people and make a reasonable plan for all!

Truly yours,

Lenny Murphy
Energy Lane
HC 65 Box 5440
Lincoln ME 04457-9423

To John Baldacci, The Governor of The State of Maine, To: The Maine State Legislature, and To: The People of Maine!

I will be addressing several situations that need to be further advanced, to help deal with the facts of, so-called, modern life! Thank you Governor Baldacci for reading the last letter I sent to you about the problems with The Learning Results! I did have a meeting with Susan Gendron, The Comm. of Education and a follow-up meeting with Patrick Phillips, the meetings were interesting distractions!

This letter will briefly deal with the continuing problems of The Learning Results, as well as several other issues that are tied together! The problems with health care, and insurances of all types, are not going away, so we should, and must, deal with all of the facts! I will not try to debate any issue, I will simply state the facts as clearly as I possibly can! I have nothing to gain, directly, from these statements, I am just trying to offer new solutions to old problems! I will briefly describe several solutions that can advance our schools, help reduce local and state taxes, reduce insurance cost of all types, provide better health care at less cost, etc.! I would be glad to go into great detail at a later date!

The Learning Results are still somewhat unfunded mandates, and unconstitutional because of it! Before we add to The Learning Results, as we are thinking about doing at this time, we must look back to see what the results are of the last group of mandatory unfunded regulations we imposed upon our communities! One town voted on the school budget 12 times, that is a fact we must deal with! One simple solution would be to let the sports program, in schools, be transferred to the town's athletic departments! That way people could volunteer to coach the teams, we can not afford a \$30,000 soccer or hockey coach, etc.! To cut down on health care cost, both short term and long term, all of the primitive head butting sports should be phased out! Health care has risen over 300% since European and Canadian sports have worked their way into our public schools! Doctors advertise for people to come to them for their sports related injuries, should that fact tell us something? Would we send our children to the fields if we could not buy insurance, of course not! But it's OK to send them if we can afford their injuries just to hold a gold ball over their heads? There are no jobs at the end of the sporting exhibitions, just higher health care costs, for sure, and injuries that will prolong into later life! Many car accidents happen because people want to go to sporting events even though the weather is bad! We need to give the teachers The Learning Results in a complete form, so the teachers will know how the State would like to have the motor built this year! Then when they know what the State is demanding of the students the teacher can get on with the task at hand, trying to get every student to become interested in what should be their education, and not just the State's thoughts on education! By finding one area that the students are interested in, at a young age, the students comprehension level will raise quickly and when kindled by their teacher, they will advance quickly! Then it will be up to the teacher to come up with the advanced learning to guide, and inspire, the young people! Once this is done all of the other subjects will come easy! As long as the students have to just sit straight, and don't move around, and don't talk or we will drug them, then the students will never be the life long learners or the creative people that The Learning Results demands. Also, the teachers would know much more by finding new levels of material for the students to advance within! This would make the teacher more capable for the next years class, or should the teacher stay with the students for a few years which could be of a great advantage to the students and their parents, who should be helping with the advanced studies of their children! As students become more interested in their education they will start to spend more time with their after school activities instead of the coaches' desires being constantly met!

Home schooling should be promoted, and if somewhat funded would still save millions of dollars! Students should still get together, within the school, to work on projects, even if home schooled!

It is upsetting that the State thought it had to step in because some students were not learning enough in school! It is also a very sad reality, that we just seen in the news, that a town was going to start up a football team because many of the males have no interest in The State's imposed education without a sport to encourage, and or pacify, them to get a passing grade! It's a sad fact when students drop out of school, or do harm to others or themselves because of the added pressures of The Learning Results! Why is it that when

there is a snow day the students are happy, is school lacking in some way? We and The Public Schools need recommendations from The State and Fed. and not more unfunded controls over Our Public Schools! Teachers and students can not change and grow in new areas when the dictations are so overbearing! Susan Gendron was right, The Dept. of Education is not playing bait and switch, but they are playing hide and go seek, as well as The Wizard of Ozz! The State is too slow in knowing the changes of our society, teachers and students can change their directions over night if they are not controlled in every shape and form! Does The State know that the old way of dating the earth has been changed, and or why, or that the continents are not moving the way we thought they were, I suggest The Scientific America Magazine! Our teachers don't know either, because they are too busy tutoring the students 6 weeks before The State's test! We need students to advance on their own, with guidance, they can challenge themselves as it should be! If the State is challenging the students, and the teachers, all the time it leaves no room, or interest, for the student or teachers to challenge themselves! The State should make opportunities for students and stop competing against the teachers and students! We must participate more in our society and back off of the less productive controlling competitive methodologies, and sports! Students must learn to make better machines for industries and not just be able to repair the machines, or, the companies will continue to leave The State of Maine and The Country as well! Maybe to keep a pursuit of happiness for The People of The State of Maine we should not allow companies to leave The State unless they sell the company to the people of Maine! Why should the big companies freedom of choose come before The Peoples? The government should be more of, by, and for The People, or we will continue our, capitalist, downhill slide!!! Not much hope for the future with the big money maggots sucking the stock market dry, is there?!!

We need to help all students supplement their incomes by introducing them to growing and preserving food! Food, besides love, is the most important thing on the plant, seems like we could at least help them out in this one area of necessity?!! Think positive and try to be apart of a truly new school system for the rest of the plant to study and improve upon!

It would be nice if all of the free information, of the universities' projects, were feed into the schools computers!

Perhaps students could help, and get paid, at hospitals and nursing homes! Just think of the long term advantages such a program could grow into, and the savings for The State as well!

If doctors could spend more time with preventive health care instead of treating sporting injuries, so much the better!

If health care providers, and all insurance companies, were forced to return most of your money at the end of the year, if you received no benefits, then people would act safer and be safer, and not drive when it is storming, etc.! Lives could be saved if the highways were closed off during bad storms, which would lower insurance cost! Why should the top people in the companies get millions just so they can have enough tax exemptions so they don't pay taxes?! They that are making profit are the most capable of paying taxes and yet they do not?! Tax laws were made by the rich for the rich, it's time the government changes things to help the people! Tell the lobbyist to go away, they do not represent the American Peoples' needs or viewpoints!

If students were more interested in their education there would be less drug overdoses and less snowmobile deaths, etc.!

Taxes are another issue! If we continue the way we are going we will have to change for sure! A flat tax is now needed so a fair share of taxes will be paid by all! Like when trees are all cut from the land, and a large profit is made, and the roads are beat up from the truck traffic! If the land is sold it is worth little and a little tax is paid on the transfer of the property! The value in the trees was already transferred before the land sold! So if the wood cutter put down enough deductions, then The State, and the Fed., gets next to nothing, nothing new! We need a tax system based on fairness not on greed and power, the National debt is up to 6 trillion, those numbers, and interest on them, will not go away! Companies can save plenty by not spending so much on , or lying about tax write-offs! Maine needs to develop a flat tax and should recommend that the State's industries send money to the Fed. on a volunteer basic to show the country that we can, and will, and have to pay our fair share of taxes! Without tax reform all inflation is pushed on those on a fixed income, or low income! Doctors, lawyers, etc., can push their income up when inflation shows up, regular people get stuck when all of the prices go up to off set inflation! When electric prices go up it pushes the price of everything up, on those that can least afford it! What remedies can you think of to solve this uncontrollable capitalist problem? As most of the big wheels skim even more money off of the surface, the less there is in the system to pay taxes! In other words, if we don't tax those capable of paying then there will end up being no money out there for the poor to pay taxes with! Please work on new solutions! We cannot just set back and let things that are seemingly out of our control, continue to take away our pursuits of happiness!

Truly yours, Lenny Murphy. HC 65 Box 5440 Lincoln, Me.

04457

Lenny Murphy

207-746-9212

2/15/05