

Testimony of Lon Seidman  
Chairman of the Essex Board of Education and the  
Regional School District 4 Supervision Committee  
Supporting SB1160

My name is Lon Seidman. I am the Chairman of the Essex Board of Education and also presently chair the Regional School District 4 Supervision District Committee - a cooperative agreement entity formed under 10-158(a).

I am here today to support of SB1160, specifically the portions that allow for tenure or continuous employment status for teachers that are moved from a local or regional school district into a cooperative agreement committee.

Chester, Deep River, and Essex have essentially five boards of Education, including a board for each town's elementary school, a board for our regional school district (grades 7-12), and a fifth committee called the Supervision District that was formed under 10-158(a).

The towns of Chester, Deep River, and Essex have saved millions of dollars over several decades sharing costs on everything from central office staff to expensive programs like special education and pre-school. The Supervision District employs staff (including a number of teachers and our central office administrators) and functions much like its own school district for a number of shared programs.

And while we've achieved some significant cost savings, we have found that five boards of education for only three towns is a bit unwieldy.

We've struggled for the better part of twenty years to find a way to fully regionalize the district into a single Board of Education. Restrictions placed in the law about how regional districts are to be financed has made it difficult for us to find a way to regionalize in a financially equitable way. Currently Essex would be hit with a nearly quarter of a million dollar charge every year if we were to fully consolidate our districts into a single board.

So after much research we're trying a different approach by looking to consolidate all PK-12 educational services into a cooperative agreement.

This would allow for more flexible cost sharing without some of the inequities associated with a strict average daily membership cost calculation of a traditional regional school district.

Part of this discussion has involved the potential consolidation of teachers in the four districts into the cooperative agreement entity. This would reduce our number of teacher contracts from five to one, and allow for more flexibility in sharing and moving staff between buildings. Current law does not allow teachers to move from a district into a cooperative agreement without losing their tenure status. Having the option to give districts the ability to consolidate contracts into a cooperative agreement without a tenure penalty would be helpful for us as we investigate this plan.

Even short of our own full consolidation, this proposed change will give us and every school district in Connecticut additional flexibility to share staff and find ways to reduce cost by collaborating with neighboring districts.

I thank the committee for your consideration and ask that you support this important change.

Thank you.