

STATE OF CONNECTICUT
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES



J. BRENDAN SHARKEY
SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE

Thank you Chairman Miller, Chairwoman Osten, Representative Aman, Senator Linares and members of the Planning & Development Committee for the opportunity to express my support for HB-5604 AAC Regional Efficiencies.

This proposal establishes a deliberative process to identify regional opportunities and develops an evaluation tool that incorporates the best practices of other states and ultimately assesses and measures the performance and efficiencies achieved by each municipality and local and regional boards of education on a regional basis.

Building off the foundation of regional initiatives that this Committee and the General Assembly have established, this bill seeks to change the paradigm by which we fund municipalities and boards of education. It sets in motion a mechanism to foster innovation and reward collaboration.

You have probably heard me state this time and time again; we cannot continue to fund municipalities and state government the same way we have been doing for the last two centuries. We just cannot afford it any longer.

In a nod to home rule, we will not be forcing municipalities or boards of education to do something they do not want to do, but we are saying that the state is not going to fund inefficiencies at the same levels that we have historically done. Instead, we propose to leverage the resources of the state with regional efforts that demonstrate cost savings and greater efficiencies.

While this bill contemplates a process that is spread out over approximately two to three years, I believe that we must expedite this timeframe and do it now. Since we envisioned this concept, much has changed even in the last couple of weeks. The new normal of steady, but less robust revenue growth, coupled with lower than projected income tax collections, warrants a change in behavior and we must adapt to these trends.

We can start by building off of regional initiatives that are already available to achieve savings and greater efficiencies such as regional public health districts, regional public safety answering points (PSAPs), the Nutmeg Network, shared services and back office functions between municipalities and boards of education, adoption of the common school calendar, joint purchasing and transportation to name a few. I am committed to working with the Committee and municipal officials to come up with a commonsense plan that delivers services more efficiently and effectively while saving taxpayer money.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify in support of HB 5604 and for your consideration.