

**Testimony, RE Governor's Senate Bill 786
An Act Concerning Mandate Relief, Transparency and Regional Incentives**

**Peter D. Calvert,
Chairman, Franklin Board of Education**

Monday, March 6, 2017

Senator Slossberg, Representative Fleischmann, Senator Boucher and distinguished members of the Education Committee,

As Chairman of the Franklin Board of Education, a Franklin resident, and a graduate of Norwich Free Academy, I would like to file my formal opposition to the governor's action as proposed in Governor's Senate Bill No. 786 which would change the composition of the NFA's governing structure.

Adding representatives from surrounding towns to Norwich Free Academy's Board of Trustees would not materially improve management, representation, academic quality or be in the best interest of the students. It would add more administration, prolong the discourse of operations, and disrupt the long standing success of the institution.

I see no logic in changing when there is no problem.

It appears that some political attitudes are distressed that tuition increases each year. However, the operational budgets for Pre-K to 8th grade for all surrounding town are also increasing, and in most cases, the increase is more than NFA's. NFA has always been considerate of any partner town's predicament and has held tuition increases below actual needs. The Norwich Free Academy Foundation, Inc., has been subsidizing the school's operations for some time in an effort to minimize the financial impact on our communities.

It is perverse logic that the Academy needs oversight because public funds are used by towns to pay the tuition. I can conservatively speculate that all towns are very pleased with the academic quality of education that NFA provides. If not, they are free to decide to send students elsewhere. They can build their own high schools or form a new district that includes an existing high school.

The State has consistently approved of the methods, curriculum and operation of the school. Nothing has changed. Why would the Governor seek to change governance of an intuition that is successful, meeting, or exceeding State Education standards and goals? More pressing educational issues need to be addressed and receive the Governor's attention. This scrutiny and energy would be better focused on teacher evaluation, testing, and solving the state's education funding shortfall.

In full disclosure, as Chairman of the Franklin Board of Education, I have not vetted my statement with our entire Board due to the lack of time. Norwich Fee Academy is our designated high school. We have options for other high schools, but the majority of our students choose to NFA.

I strongly urge the State to leave this issue alone.