



OLD SAYBROOK PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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Chairmen Douglas McCrory and Robert Sanchez, and members of the Education Committee,

I am writing today about SB 874, SB 457 and SB 738, all of which propose various ways to regionalize, consolidate and share education. I offer support and information about the CAPPs legislative proposal to incentivize school district regionalism, which is to: *Modify current legislation to encourage the expansion of efficient regional programs by removing inhibitive requirements, establishing opportunities for equal relationships among all parties, and provide opportunities for flexibility and innovation.* Regionalism of programs and/or regionalization of school districts will work only when the primary reason for combining resources is to provide better opportunities for students. Cost efficiencies may come from combining districts, but there is no doubt that new costs will find their way into these relationships and municipalities will have less fiscal control over those costs.

Many school districts, through necessity or choice, have combined curricular and/or extra-curricular programs, share certified and non-certified staff and business office efforts. Still others share superintendents and other central office staff. Districts also share resources with their municipal government; including liability and property insurance, business office staff, unemployment and workers' compensation insurances, technology personnel and accounting software. Many districts utilize the services of the RESCs and engage with them through purchasing cooperatives, insurance collaboratives, regional professional development and/or specialized student services. Incentivize districts and municipalities do more of this by removing some of the legislation and bureaucracy that impedes further growth. I have [attached a document](#) to this testimony that shares some of the efforts being made by municipalities and school districts in the southeastern region of the State of Connecticut as an example of the type and amount of regional cooperation that is already taking place.

When regional school districts were created in the 1970s and 1980s, districts were incentivized through many financial means. Since we are all cognizant of our financial concerns for our State, a means to incentivize would be to remove the requirements for the creation of a separate LEA whenever a program is developed between or among multiple agencies. Allow Boards of Education to create an agreement as to the terms of the relationship including; type, duration, and each party's commitment so that no one school district is left vulnerable to volatile changes in demographics. Example: allow three districts to develop an alternative high school program for students with social needs for a period of 5 years to serve a student population in each district that would benefit by this relationship. The agreement could include specifications about: staffing, hiring and

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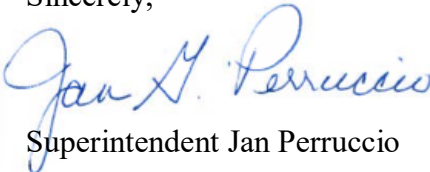
"The mission of the Old Saybrook Public Schools is to educate and prepare students to achieve their highest aspirations, care for others and the environment, and contribute to a global society by working in partnership with families and the community, and by engaging each learner in a rigorous, personalized, and meaningful educational program."

supervision, a formula for expenses, an agreement with labor unions, an understanding of how policies and regulations would be enforced and a plan for separation should the program no longer be needed by one or more parties. With current legislation, a separate Board would need to be developed. State reports would need to be separate and unique from the districts' other reports and employment contracts would need to be renegotiated to establish relationships with a new employer. Repealing some of the legislative language that inhibits regional efforts would be beneficial and would not have to be expensive.

When considering any form of regionalization, the expenses inherent in a larger (geographically and demographically) district must be considered. Layers of administration would most likely need to be added. Transportation expenses, one of the largest budget drivers in most districts, would most likely need to increase as students are picked up at homes further from their schools and dropped off many miles away. Staff contracts would need to be renegotiated and the variances among districts' remuneration practices would need to be addressed. It would be very hard to get the best compensated staff to accept a lower compensation. It is much more likely that all compensation would have to increase to match. New schools would need to be built, thus adding cost, or current school buildings would have to house fewer grade levels creating more frequent transitions for students, which research indicates creates student performance regression. Some districts, because of their geography or for other reasons, may find that full regionalization is ideal for them, and that is something I would like to see supported, but forced regionalization will be difficult, if not impossible, to make work for our students.

Forced regionalization along geographical, regional or any other lines will not be very successful. Capitalizing on what is being implemented already is an easier and more viable means to an end. The proposed bills may undermine the good work that has resulted in good programming and efficiencies.

Sincerely,



Superintendent Jan Perruccio