



STATE OF CONNECTICUT

OFFICE OF POLICY AND MANAGEMENT

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Testimony Supporting Senate Bill No. 874

AN ACT CONCERNING EDUCATION INITIATIVES AND SERVICES IN CONNECTICUT

Co-Chairs McCrory and Sanchez, Ranking Members Berthel and McCarty and distinguished members of the Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony on Senate Bill No. [874](#), An Act Concerning Education Initiatives and Services in Connecticut.

Secretary McCaw has provided this Committee with testimony on multiple parts of this bill. I want to focus on one piece (Sections 1, 2 and 4), the responsibility charged to a newly created body, the Commission on Shared School Services (COSSS). COSSS is designed to bring all stakeholders to the table to develop a plan for sharing or consolidating school services and school districts. The detailed process set forth by this bill is intended to engage subject-matter experts from all perspectives and provide the resources necessary to discuss and meet key milestones between November 1, 2019 and December 15, 2020. These recommendations would be the subject of a public hearing and then additional recommendations may follow.

The intent is not to force any specific plan from the top down. More broadly, the intent is not to force anything; COSSS is empowered to recommend, not implement, effective solutions. The intent is to create a productive process to review best practices and determine opportunities to share the delivery of educational services so we are more efficient and cost-effective, and improve the quality of our schools.

This bottom up process is not being undertaken in a vacuum. It goes hand-in-hand with a similar bottom up process that is parallel and overlapping. House Bill [7192](#), currently in the Planning and Development Committee, sets forth a process to engage stakeholders to determine how best to share and consolidate services within and among municipalities

and on a regional basis. The body charged with driving that effort is the Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations (ACIR).

While these two service delivery discussions are not entirely the same, they are similar and overlapping in many ways. As a result, they should not be siloed, but instead must be approached in a holistic fashion. The Governor's bills, SB 874 and HB 7192, thoughtfully weave these two processes together. For example:

- Section 2 of SB 874 includes language (also in Sec. 8 of HB 7192) that directs COSSS to develop its plan for redistricting or consolidating school services and school districts in consultation with ACIR.
- Section 4 of SB 874 includes language (also in Sec. 10 of HB 7192) requiring that, by September 15, 2019, each municipality and local or regional board of education submit a report on services being shared to OPM, which would forward the reports to COSSS and ACIR. Both bills further provide that not later than January 1, 2020, each municipality and local or regional board of education must, in consultation with the ACIR and COSSS, develop a report on which services will be shared or consolidated, and provide an explanation when services are not being shared or consolidated.

I respectfully request you support SB 874, which along with HB 7192, set forth the common ground of a process through which we can collectively engage, discuss, analyze and create action plans to meet the challenge of how to best serve Connecticut students in the 21st century.

Again, I would like to again thank the Committee for the opportunity to present this testimony.