



Maine School Superintendents Association

"Better Schools for Maine Students"

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The Maine School Superintendents Association (MSSA) believes that the recently enacted consolidation law has numerous flaws that include:

1. Unreasonable time line requirements.
2. Unsubstantiated claims of cost savings and property tax relief.
3. Cost-shifting that will severely disadvantage some communities.
4. A cumbersome, costly, budget validation referendum approval process.
5. Not recognizing or honoring the demographic nature of our state with its requirement for 2500 pupil units.

The MSSA believes that, at a minimum, the law should be amended:

1. To allow sufficient time to complete the Legislative process and gather public input in order for local communities to make informed decisions.
2. To require that extensive research be conducted to determine if improved student learning can be validated as a result of school consolidation.
3. To require that the Department of Education prepare a validated financial analysis to show the citizens in each proposed RSU what the Department of Education (DOE) projects for General Purpose Aid and where the DOE believes savings could specifically be achieved.
4. To create a Special Task Force to identify the problems/issues being generated by the law as passed with the authority to make recommendations to the Legislature to correct and refine the law. The Task Force would be empowered to recommend changes to the school funding formula and recommend appropriations to accomplish the recommendations. The Task Force should be composed of superintendents, school board members and other school unit representatives, municipal officials and citizens.
5. To give more attention to the benefits of regionalization of services as well as consolidation.
6. To authorize each RSU's Legislative Body to determine the method by which its budget is finally approved.
7. To allow each RSU to adopt its own cost-sharing agreements.

The above constitutes but a small portion of the issues that need to be addressed. MSSA believes that taking the time to identify, address, and correct the deficiencies of this law offers an opportunity to make voluntary consolidation and regionalization workable. If the Department of Education continues to portray this law as needing only minor adjustments to be workable, then the resulting consequences will directly and negatively impact all Maine students, schools, and communities.

The Maine School Superintendents Association's Executive Committee directs its Officers, Legislative Committee, and MSMA staff to work with members of the Maine Legislature and Department of Education to achieve these significant and necessary amendments to the "Consolidation" law enacted as part of LD 499, the state budget bill.

Adopted by the MSSA Executive Committee
December 7, 2007