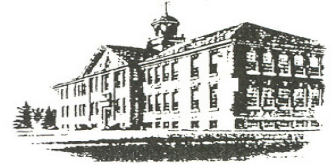


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Date: _____

To: Honorable Members of Maine's Senate and House of Representatives
From: _____, Parent/Community member from School Union 60 (Shirley, Beaver Cove, Greenville, Willimantic, and Kingsbury Plt., ME) and MSAD 12 (Jackman and Moose River, ME)
RE: Position statement regarding School District Reorganization
Cc: Local Legislative Delegates Rep. Pete Johnson and Sen. Doug Smith

Dear Honorable Representatives and Senators:

Below please find a position statement regarding the school district regionalization process that is currently underway across the state of Maine.

POSITION STATEMENT

School Union 60 & MSAD 12

"School District Regionalization"

We believe our schools are fundamentally important to the education of our children, the economic future of our region and the close knit societal aspects of our local communities. The current regionalization law that has been passed by the legislature and pushed by the Governor has several aspects that would seriously degrade one or all of these important considerations. Both School Union 60 & MSAD 12, however, are committed to finding, developing, and implementing more cost efficient methods of providing educational services to our communities. We believe strongly that there are ways to run our schools more efficiently in a manner that will not negatively impact the education of our students or the economic future of our region, but that way may not be uniform across the state, nor should it be. If change is to be done effectively, however, certain aspects of both the process of change and the outcome that is sought need to be addressed:

Process of Change:

- **The most effective and long lasting change occurs from the bottom up approach.** The state should set goals and reasonable timelines to accomplish tasks, but allow for the decisions to be made at the local level.
- **Understand that one size does NOT fit all.** Both Union 60 and MSAD 12 are truly isolated schools. They may not be on an island, but they are "islands" without water. The organization of

regions should be based upon geography and commonalities within areas that have like-minded communities, and always with alternate options for districts that are geographically isolated.

- **Decisions must be based upon solid data.** A clear articulation of the savings to be expected is important to understand, document and explain to the citizens. The costs to implement and the implied costs to the region's social and economic development are equally important to understand and document. If the goal is to save taxpayer dollars the savings and costs need to be honestly portrayed.
- **Educational Benefits must be identified.** The purpose of schools is to educate children in a manner that enables ALL our children to feel success as members of a community of learners and to translate that success into academic achievement. This academic achievement will allow our children to choose their futures rather than have their futures chosen for them. If Regionalization cannot produce equity in educational programming and an expansion of programs to our children then it is not the answer we are seeking.
- **Reasonable timelines must be created.** If done intelligently, regionalization will take considerable time to implement. We are NOT talking about creating taskforces and study groups, etc in an effort to stall change. Effective, long lasting change, is done incrementally in small steps over time with an ultimate goal in mind. Chaos that would negatively impact student performance would be the only result of change that is implemented too quickly.
- **Financial incentives should be used as a means to “get the ball rolling”.** Having good conversations requires that there be meetings, with people to facilitate, research, pilot, etc. These things, if done correctly, require some funding. If you want people to seriously look into significant changes, stop beating them over the brow and show them just how serious you are by offering some incentives for change.
- **Final voter approval of any regionalization proposal or consolidation plan should be allowed for without fear of penalty.** Whenever you discuss school reform measures, every child in every community, every parent in every community, and every grandparent in every community is ultimately affected by changes. Changes in Schools impact the entire community. Any significant changes should be put before the people to vote upon without the weight of penalties hanging over their heads. These choices should be made based upon what is best for our children both fiscally and programmatically.

Goals and Objectives for Change:

1. The very first goal MUST always be to improve student learning.
2. Reduce the tax burden of public education on the local taxpayer by becoming more efficient and cost effective while being careful not to go against #1! ☺
3. Increase collaboration between school units and other public entities such as between the town, hospital, and other local businesses within the municipality and/or district.
4. Creation of “necessary” or “isolated” school status that would allow for exceptions to be made for schools that are geographically isolated from others.
5. Creation of a system that allows for local control to be maintained in a meaningful way.
6. Creation of a clearly defined mission that does not change every other year.

Implementing a successful restructuring of Maine schools will require attention to all of these areas described above. Certainly, Maine schools can be more effective, and they must be more efficient. We need to design a better organizational structure for our schools. **Quick solutions will not work.** Comprehensive planning, done within a specified time frame, involving the public, recognizing children as our first priority, offers the best opportunity to provide high quality education, while at the same time becoming more cost effective and responsive to Maine taxpayers.

RESOLUTION:

School Union 60 & MSAD 12

“School District Regionalization Proposals”

It is hereby resolved that I, as a citizen of the Town of _____, ME support well planned efforts to encourage the efficient delivery of educational services through cooperation among school units, and regional delivery of specific administrative functions. I must be clear, however, that I oppose the Regionalization law as it currently exists, and any other regionalization proposal that goes against the spirit and intent of the Position Statement listed above.

Respectfully submitted,
