

Good morning, Senator Hardy. [...]

I would like to take this opportunity to weigh in on another proposed amendment to legislation - S.55.

The intent of the law is admirable; in practice, we already run hybrid meetings in most cases. Therefore, we see the value. However, to require such a thing seems to be an undue burden.

Potentially, it could open up school boards to unnecessary criticism at best and legal action at worst if, for some reason, things go awry when trying to run a hybrid meeting. We have experienced technical issues at times in the past, and I would not want to open us and the Board to ridicule if changes to S.55 became law.

Like everyone else, board members are very busy between their work lives and serving on school boards. There have been times when all members of board committees, for example, have been traveling and/or unable to attend physically, forcing us to hold virtual only meetings. This option allows the board to be more efficient in conducting school business while providing public participation. Under the proposed S.55, we likely would have had to cancel those meetings.

We have also had situations where it made sense for the board to hold meetings offsite or in another building. If we had to do such a thing under S.55, it would create a challenge that would require us to expend an unusual amount of people-hours to comply. So, S.55 would have a chilling effect on a board's desire to hold meetings at another site (ex: an outlying elementary building.)

School boards already face a fair amount of criticism, sometimes warranted and sometimes not. S.55 would only exacerbate that problem. Citizen access to local governments has only increased since the pandemic, and I do not see it reverting back to pre-pandemic levels. As such, I view this proposed legislation as an unnecessary and undue burden.

Thank you for your consideration.
Tim

--

Timothy P. Williams, Ed. D.
Interim Superintendent
Addison Central School District