

April 8, 2014

Testimony before the House Ways and Means Committee Regarding H.883 – An Act relating to expanded prekindergarten-grade 12 school districts.

John L. Barone, Sr., Ed.D., Superintendent of Schools, Milton Town School District

Summary of H.883 “H.883, an act relating to expanded prekindergarten-grade 12 districts, requires Vermont’s 282 school districts (note: currently serving 89,256 students through school district sizes ranging from nine student to 3,993 students) to realign into an estimated 45-55 “expanded districts” by July 1, 2020; all supervisory unions (note: currently serving from two to 14 school districts) would cease to exist. Expanded districts would be governed by a single board and operate a single budget. They would be designed to recognize historic community relationships, existing school district connections, and geographic obstacles.

My Background:

1986-1996 – Poultney High School (Rutland Southwest Supervisory Union - Middle/High School Teacher – Social Studies/History/Civics, Spanish, & Reading; Acting Principal (Spring 1994), Dean of Students (1995-1996)

1996-1997 – Archbishop Spaulding High School, Severn, Maryland – Dean of Students

1997-2003 – Essex High School (Chittenden Central Supervisory Union) Spanish Teacher (2 years), Assistant Principal (4 years)

2003-2008 – Colchester Middle School (Colchester School District) – Principal

2008-2011 – Barre Supervisory Union – Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum, Instruction, & Assessment

2011-Present – Milton Town School District – Superintendent of Schools

For the last six years, I have had the opportunity to work as an Assistant Superintendent and Superintendent of schools in both a supervisory union (Barre Supervisory Union) and a single school district (Milton Town School District). Given my experiences having worked in both of these governance models, I am in support of H.883 and I believe that this realignment is in the best interest of public education in Vermont for the following reasons:

(1) Improvement of opportunities for students.

- The ability to provide a well-articulated, aligned curricula for grades PreK-12 in a consistent manner
- The use of data to make better informed decisions across the district and to be able to move programs/services based upon the data
- More even distribution of services (Special Education, remedial, acceleration); less variability of services
- A more consistent implementation of the curriculum from school-to-school within an SD for students who move between the schools.

(2) Improvement of Systems.

- The management of one faculty agreement/contract vs. multiple agreements/contracts
- One set of district policies vs. policies for each individual district plus supervisory union policies
- The management/oversight of one district budget vs. multiple budgets within an SU
- One contract means the ability to move staff around to fill vacancies/meet student needs in a much more fluid manner
- Purchasing can be centralized which can result in cost savings (textbooks, technology, paper, etc.)
- Less redundancy – 2 food service programs within the SU vs. 1 food service program for the district
- Shared professional development opportunities
- Federal dollars are awarded to the LEA and then distributed from the Central/District Office

(3) The “Do-ability” of the Job

- 30% turn over in Vermont Superintendent positions for 2014-2015
- 1 Board vs. multiple board
- Less redundancy
- Educational Leadership vs. Educational Management
- The ability to maintain individual school identity while working towards a common mission/vision