

TESTIMONY PROVIDED TO: Senate Education Committee

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Topic: H361

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There seem to be two main concepts in opposition to each other in the work to date. If we can strike a balance between these two components:

We need to maintain a sense of community through our community schools.

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We need to scale up to find efficiencies, while improving educational quality.

To address these issues, we need a differentiated approach, but we recommend that there are some non-negotiable that remain.

Differentiated:

1. Develop a study of merger and governance as a part of the education quality reviews.
2. Allow proposals that create opportunity to show how change would increase efficiency and effectiveness.
3. Provide incentive and give areas of flexibility around governance models.
4. Develop supports for districts that want to merge in order to hold them harmless from districts within borders that do not want to merge.

Non-Negotiable:

1. Fund studies where systems want to change.
2. Recognize that the cost of transitioning through sizable change is significant. Provide support for these costs through tax rate decreases that taper off to avoid a cliff, yet assist with up front costs.
3. Continue with Act 153 regarding the centralization of Support Services. Use this data to consider benefits of centralizing across the state in other areas.
4. Reduce the financial responsibility to systems moving forward to hold them harmless from those systems that do not want to change.
5. Develop expected process that verifies negative impact to students or increased efficiency of status quo for those systems that do not move forward.

Benefits for Support Services in a Governance Change:

Scaling up for efficiency
Improved continuum of service options for students
Stability of cost in special education
Enhanced professional development
Continuity of providers
Smoother transitions