

# ORLEANS CENTRAL SUPERVISORY UNION

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To the House Education Committee,

I am Bev Davis, superintendent, of the Orleans Central Supervisory Union. I was asked to testify regarding the proposal to delay the implementation of Act 46.

First of all, I'd like to say that some of our community members are very opposed to merging and two of our school boards have signed onto the lawsuit. This has been contentious and it will continue to be so if we drag it out for another year. If we are going to merge anyway, we need to move forward and engage with our community with students as the focus.

The most important point to remember is that we need to be able to turn our attention to teaching and learning. We have been so intent on this process that other things have taken a back seat. A delay would mean another year of working in silos rather than looking at our whole system. We've started planning for some changes that will lead to more equitable opportunities for students. We need to be able to start exploring the possibilities that a consolidated district provides. As a lifelong educator committed to children and communities I can see the benefits of unification.

The July 1st deadline is not a surprise to us. We've known since Act 46 was passed that we would be merged by July 1, 2019, either voluntarily or by order of the State Board of Education. We can be up and running by July 1st; there is a lot to do, but we have a checklist of tasks and we've been planning for how to accomplish them in a short timeframe. We have shared the document with our central office staff, current board members, and our administrative team, and we are all working together in anticipation of a July 1<sup>st</sup> implementation.

We have one non-operating district that wasn't part of the forced merger and that now wants to join the new union elementary district (they already belong to our union high school district). They are looking to stabilize their tax rates and have a voice in decision-making, and they would like to do that by July 1, 2019. This is a community that is willing and ready to take action now, not a year from now.

Whatever you decide to do, I urge you to make a decision quickly. If implementation is going to be delayed then we need to vote local district budgets by Town Meeting day. Warnings for our meetings on Town Meeting need to be included in annual reports so they've already gone to the printer without budget numbers included. If there is a delay and we need to vote on budgets on Town Meeting day, we will have to figure out how to proceed.

Thank-you for the opportunity to share this information. This is my first time testifying on any bill as I have been a superintendent for just two years. That stated, this is an important matter and I welcome the opportunity to be here. I'm happy to answer any questions.