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Position Statement of the Maine School Boards Association  
(MSBA) Board of Directors on the Proposed LSRS (Local Schools,  
Regional Support) Initiative

The MSBA has historically supported voluntary school administrative unit collaboration, regionalization, and consolidation by Maine's school administrative units. MSBA has assisted the efforts of local school units in their voluntary pursuit of a unified delivery of all aspects of the educational program including administration and governance.

MSBA based its examination of the LSRS (Local Schools, Regional Support) proposal to change the current governance and administration options available to towns, cities, SAD's and CSD's on the following:

- Student learning must be the paramount concern in assessing the value of any regionalization/consolidation plan.
- Proposals to implement regionalization/consolidation must be based on balanced, independent research and data.
- School administrative units should have options available to achieve any goals associated with collaboration, regionalization, or consolidation in order to respect the diversity and geography of our state and to allow for local and regional creativity and flexibility.
- Any efforts to require regionalization/consolidation must include local voter approval as part of the process.

The Maine School Boards Association Board of Directors believes that Governor Baldacci's LSRS initiative is an extreme proposal that would destroy our system of local public school governance and negatively alter Maine's quality of education. This proposal was hastily drafted, lacks critical detail, and appears to be based on faulty cost-saving assumptions.

As Maine citizens acquire additional information about the Governor's plans, we believe that they will conclude the proposal is ill conceived, and ignores Maine's traditions, geography, and the existence of previously established consolidated units. It will also be viewed as derailing ongoing efforts to collaborate, regionalize and consolidate that are at critical stages in the planning and approval process.



While MSBA understands the underlying political strategy of the Baldacci administration to keep the media focused on the elimination of high level administrative positions, and to direct attention away from the proposal's fatal flaws, we believe that Maine people will demand that every aspect of the plan be subject to careful scrutiny.

Maine citizens have always taken their responsibility to educate Maine children with the utmost seriousness and MSBA believes that the ultimate test for any consolidation plan will be - is it "responsible", not is it simply "bold".

Major concerns with this scheme include its assault on local control; the loss of municipal voice and values; an extremely awkward budget approval process that has the potential to disenfranchise many local voters and undermine local support for public education; the creation of State mandated super-sized systems governed by mega-boards; the shifting of special-ed responsibilities for youngsters age birth through five to the public schools and local taxpayers; the likelihood that small schools will soon fall victim to mega-district politics; and the likelihood that student achievement will be negatively impacted by the separation of governance and leadership from school building and classroom.

We call on the Governor, Commissioner and the Legislature to quickly abandon this proposal and invite parents, teachers, administrators, school board members, municipal officers, and citizens to the table to first design a process within which to foster collaboration, regionalization, and consolidation and then, in the spirit of the Sinclair Act, consider the creation of regional bodies composed of concerned and knowledgeable Maine citizens to develop and suggest options for cooperation, regionalization and consolidation that would then be approved by the local citizens.

The Baldacci administration's proposal is divisive; it was created without public input, and it runs counter to the basic suggestions put forth by the recent major reports that deal with these important issues.

MSBA calls upon Maine's Legislative leadership to invite people to the table in an open process and work on proposals that will unite and excite our citizens as opposed to fragmenting our energies. We must create practical and effective plans that ensure cost effective and high quality education for all Maine's students.

MSBA stands ready to work with Governor Baldacci, Commissioner Gendron, the Maine Legislature, and the State Board of Education, as well as the Maine Municipal Association, the Maine Education Association, and the Maine State Chamber of Commerce and others so that education is not harmed, taxpayers get relief and we preserve our core values of excellence in education, local control, individual contributions, and the application of common sense for the public good.