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An Act To Encourage School Administrative Units To Collaborate with Other School Administrative Units

CONCEPT DRAFT SUMMARY

This bill is a concept draft pursuant to Joint Rule 208.

The bill proposes to provide the opportunity for current school administrative units to form regional cooperatives to aid in the efficient delivery of educational services while maintaining a high-quality educational system for students, teachers, community members and schools. The bill would balance the independence of the legislative bodies of school administrative units and local control with the efficient delivery of administrative services for schools while enhancing the educational programs provided for prekindergarten to grade 12 public education students in the State.

Under this bill, school administrative units would form regional cooperatives that serve at least 2,800 students. The bill would also establish the Efficient Delivery of Educational Services Commission, referred to in this concept draft as “the commission,” whose responsibilities include management of the fund, along with supporting, approving and monitoring the progress of the regional cooperatives. The regional cooperatives would apply to the commission for approval and financial incentives through the existing Fund for the Efficient Delivery of Educational Services, established under the Maine Revised Statutes, Title 20-A, section 15754. The commission would implement reorganization and cost savings for school administrative units that do not participate in a regional cooperative and for school administrative units that are unable to achieve the cost-savings benchmarks established by the commission for regional cooperatives.

Key Elements:

1. A school administrative unit may enter into an agreement with another school administrative unit or units to form a regional cooperative to increase efficiency and lower costs of delivering public education for prekindergarten to grade 12 students and to provide for equitable, high-quality education for all students.

2. School administrative units would develop regional cooperatives that are contiguous and advantageous to the community and their delivery of an educational system for prekindergarten to grade 12 students.

3. The commission would be formed to support, approve, and monitor regional cooperatives.

A. The membership of the commission would include the Commissioner of Education, the Commissioner of Administrative and Financial Services, two members of the Legislature who would be appointed by the Speaker of the House and the President of the Senate, a member of the State Board of Education, four members representing public school officials and four members of the general public appointed by the Governor.

B. The commission would approve regional cooperatives and offer financial incentives to regional cooperatives through the Fund for the Efficient Delivery of Educational Services.

C. The commission would define the expenditures to be included in the system administration cost category established in Title 20-A, section 15680 and would establish benchmarks for the level of per-pupil cost savings to be achieved by school administrative units for the 2008-2009 and 2010-2011 legislative biennia. The benchmarks selected by the commission would be based on either the national average or the average of peer states of per-pupil expenditures for the system administration cost category. The definition of the system administration cost category developed by the commission would include, but would not be limited to, the following:

- (1) Financial management functions;
- (2) Administrative personnel;
- (3) Transportation;
- (4) Facilities and maintenance;
- (5) Human resource management;
- (6) Supplies and equipment;
- (7) Fuel and utilities;
- (8) Specialized education;
- (9) School nutrition programs; and
- (10) Professional development.

D. The commission would make an annual recommendation to the Commissioner of Education for the enactment of a per-pupil expenditure rate for the distribution of state subsidy under the Essential Programs and Services Funding Act over this 4-year period in order to ensure that the per-pupil expenditures for the system administration cost category established in Title 20-A, section 15680 would be reduced each year until this rate matches the benchmark for the per-pupil expenditures for the system administration cost category selected by the commission by fiscal year 2010-11.

E. The commission would also provide models of efficient and effective governance and administrative structures that promote student achievement, including data that can be used by school boards, superintendents and school administrative units that participate in existing or emerging regional cooperatives.

F. The commission would be required to submit a quarterly report to the Legislature and the Governor on the progress of regional cooperatives. The commission would submit a report on the educational mandates that are in statute that contribute to costs of education at state and local levels and would make recommendations to the Legislature.

4. In order for an entity to qualify for approval by commission as a regional cooperative, the entity must have a minimum of 2,800 students and establish a regional plan to generate cost savings in the delivery of public education services from prekindergarten to grade 12 that contains:

A. A mission statement and related cost-saving goals and objectives;

B. A plan that establishes a governance body and organization;

C. Specific cost-saving targets for per-pupil system administration that meet the per-pupil expenditures for the system administration cost category established in Title 20-A, section 15680 and the benchmarks selected by the commission for the per-pupil expenditures for the system administration cost category;

D. A plan for reimbursement of the savings realized through implementation of the regional plan to taxpayers;

E. A plan for the regional cooperative to report annually to the citizenry on the ongoing school improvement process and the school administrative unit's updated comprehensive educational plan; and

F. A plan to review and ensure the sustainability of the cost effectiveness of local schools.

5. The commission may approve some extreme cases of geographic hardship for entities with less than the approved number of students.

6. School administrative units with current student populations of at least 2,800 would not be required to form regional cooperatives, but would be required to comply with the annual per-pupil expenditure benchmarks established by the commission for the system administration cost category. If the commission determines that such a school administrative unit fails to meet these benchmarks, then the commission would develop and implement a reorganization and cost-savings plan for the school administrative unit.

7. If a school administrative unit has not entered into a regional cooperative by June 2009 or if the commission determines that school administrative unit has failed to meet the annual per-pupil expenditure benchmarks established by the commission for the system administration cost category, then the commission would develop and implement a reorganization and cost-savings plan for the school administrative unit.

Timeline:

From September 2007 to June 2008: School administrative units seek input from the public about regional cooperatives and begin planning regional cooperatives.

By June 2008: School administrative units form regional cooperatives and apply to the commission.

By July 2008: Commission approves regional cooperatives.

By June 2009: Regional cooperatives implement plans, make adjustments and report cost savings.

By July 2009: Commission implements reorganization and cost-saving plans for school administrative units that have not entered into a regional cooperative or that have failed to meet the annual per-pupil expenditure benchmarks established by the commission for the system administration cost category.

By May 2010: Regional cooperatives realign work, plan for sustainability and report progress.