

PLEASE NOTE: Legislative Information **cannot** perform research, provide legal advice, or interpret Maine law. For legal assistance, please contact a qualified attorney.

## **An Act To Reform Public Education by Encouraging Regional Approaches**

### **CONCEPT DRAFT SUMMARY**

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

This bill proposes to reform public education by implementing recommendations included in the report entitled, “A Case for Cooperation: Making Connections to Improve Education for All Maine Students,” published by the Maine Children’s Alliance in 2006. The bill would amend the education laws in order to encourage new and expanded regional approaches to school organization and to facilitate voluntary cooperation in the delivery of educational programs and services. Legislation developed to reform public education would include, but would not be limited to, the following:

1. The establishment of school planning alliances in 26 regions of the State based upon the existing centers and regions in the career and technical education system established in the Maine Revised Statutes, Title 20-A, chapter 313. A school planning alliance would be authorized to create a plan to increase educational opportunities, streamline administration and gain efficiencies for the school administrative units within the region. A school planning alliance would:

A. Be established upon the election in November 2007 of a regional planning board composed of 11 members from the school administrative units and municipalities in the region. The board would have 9 voting members, 3 school board members, 3 elected municipal officers and 3 members of the public. The board would have 2 nonvoting ex officio members, one superintendent and one municipal manager who are selected by a caucus within the region of superintendents and municipal managers;

B. Be provided with state funding from the Fund for the Efficient Delivery of Educational Services established in Title 20-A, section 15754 for technical assistance and facilitation services;

C. Be required, within one year, to develop and adopt a plan to meet the requirements of the system of learning results established in Title 20-A, chapter 222, including the appropriate curriculum, programs and instructional methods to ensure that student performance will meet the proficiency standards of the statewide assessment program within 3 years;

D. Be required, within one year, to develop and adopt a plan to ensure that the cost components that are not directly related to classroom instruction adhere to the adequate funding levels determined in accordance with the Essential Programs and Services Funding Act as described in Title 20-A, chapter 606-B within 3 years;

E. Be required, following review and approval of the plan by the Department of Education, to submit the plan to the voters in the region for ratification within 6 months of the adoption of the plan by the regional planning board; and

F. Be dissolved within 18 months after it was established

2. The establishment of a new type of school administrative unit, the regional school district, as an option for school administrative units within a school planning alliance as described in section 1 to cooperate in creating a more effective and cost-efficient school system. The regional school district would:

- A. Be governed by a school board composed of members representing the municipalities within the region in accordance with the principles of one person, one vote. School board members would be elected to represent subdistricts established within the district or be elected at large by all of the voters in the district;
- B. Be financed by a districtwide budget to be prepared by the school board and approved by the voters of the district. A municipality's total cost of education would be the district's total cost of education multiplied by the percentage that the municipality's pupil count is to the district's pupil count in accordance with Title 20-A, section 15688;
- C. Be administered by a single superintendent to be selected and hired by the school board;
- D. Be authorized to establish a program of public school choice for all elementary and secondary schools in the district; and
- E. Be an option for the conversion of existing school administrative districts or community school districts;

3. The amendment of state laws and rules for financing the construction and renovation of school facilities to establish a regional school construction finance program that complements current state finance programs for the construction of new school facilities as established by Title 20-A, chapter 609 and for the renovation of existing school facilities as established by Title 30-A, section 6006-F. The regional school construction finance program would:

- A. Be funded by authorizing state funding from the Fund for the Efficient Delivery of Educational Services established in Title 20-A, section 15754 and by recapitalizing the school revolving renovation fund with General Fund appropriations or the proceeds of bonds issued by the State;
- B. Be established with flexible approval provisions that would permit applications from joint or multiple school administrative units and from regional school districts for public education for any combination of kindergarten to grade 12; and
- C. Be required to meet State Board of Education rules for minimum levels for pupil enrollment, adequate curriculum to meet the requirements of the system of learning results, significant cost efficiency as compared to existing schools in the region, appropriate school siting, appropriate use of new technology and energy efficiency;

4. The authorization for regional cooperative organizations to be eligible for state funding from the Fund for the Efficient Delivery of Educational Services established in Title 20-A, section 15754 for the provision of support services, classroom instruction when needed to provide an adequate curricular program and enrichment programs. A regional cooperative organization would be eligible for state funding if the regional cooperative organization:

- A. Employs an executive director and is a private, nonprofit corporation with a public purpose under the United States Internal Revenue Code, Section 501(c)(3);

B. Serves one or more school administrative units that enroll at least 3,000 pupils or at least 5,000 pupils in the 8 most populous counties in the State; and

C. Provides direct services to the member school administrative units in one or more of the following support service or instructional areas: transportation, food service, special education, maintenance and plant management, collective bargaining, accounting and payroll, legal services, communications, advanced placement courses and foreign language courses;

5. The creation of a model statewide school calendar that would be adopted at the local level and coordinated at the regional level;

6. The requirement that all school administrative districts and regional school districts be named. Existing numbers for school administrative districts should be replaced with names identifying the districts;

7. The authorization for the Department of Education to adopt or amend rules to establish educational standards for the approval of a school administrative unit that petitions to become a member of, or to withdraw from, a school district; and

8. The restoration of full funding for the Fund for the Efficient Delivery of Educational Services at an amount equivalent to 2% of the total amount appropriated for the General Purpose Aid for Local Schools program during the 2008-2009 biennium. These funds would be available to:

A. Provide technical assistance and facilitation to regional planning alliances;

B. Provide support for eligible regional cooperative organizations;

C. Capitalize the regional school construction finance program; and

D. Award grants for innovative programs through a competitive request-for-proposal process to enhance the curriculum and expand career and technical education programs, to secure the technology to offer specialized courses throughout the State and to provide regional continuing education programs for teachers and administrators.