NEW ENGLAND ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

May 17, 2021

To: Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs
From: The New England Association of Schools and Colleges
Cameron Staples, President and CEO
RE: LD 1672: An Act to Require That Private Schools That Enroll 60 Percent or More Publicly Funded Students Meet Certain Requirements

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs:

This letter addresses the Standards, Policies and Procedures the New England Association of Schools and Colleges uses to Accredit Member Schools throughout the six-state region and around the world.

The New England Association of Schools and Colleges, established in 1885, is the nation's oldest accrediting body. The Standards and procedures of the Association created the template for many other regional accrediting organizations. NEASC is not an advocacy organization and generally does not take positions regarding legislative matters. We are aware of legislation before this Committee that relates to oversight of Town Academies and references the NEASC Accreditation process. Consequently, while we take no position regarding the pending proposal, we would like to serve as a resource to this Committee and provide information regarding the nature and scope of the Accreditation process.

Currently, NEASC accredits some 1800 schools throughout New England and in eighty countries. The Commission on Independent Schools accredits each of the Maine Town Academies, the schools designated as enrolling at least 60% of their students from their local regions. The Association also accredits many of Maine's public secondary schools.

NEASC Accreditation is a rigorous and continuous process. The Commission on Independent Schools requires each Member School to undertake a Self-Study at five-year intervals, write a detailed and thorough Report about their findings and articulate progress and plans for improvement. The Self-Studies are reviewed onsite for several days by a team of volunteer professional educators who, in turn, write comprehensive responses both commending the schools for achievements and making formal Recommendations for improvement.

Member Schools must report annually on progress on each Recommendation and must demonstrate adherence to the Standards of the Association. Additionally, schools must review the "NEASC Health and Safety Guidelines" annually.

The entire process for each school is then reviewed by the Commission on Independent Schools, an impartial group of 25 independent school leaders who examine, in detail, each school's Reports and progress. The Commission meets three times each year to review the schools.

The NEASC "Standards/Self-Study/Peer Review" Process is recognized by each of the New England States as essential to the quality of Accredited Schools and is a fundamental component of State recognition by a number of State Departments of Education.

NEASC Accreditation is founded on the importance of in-person, on-site review of each school and Self-Studies provide an open, thorough and essential opportunity for schools to reflect on the Standards of the Association and their current realities.

NEASC Accreditation Standards and process are widely recognized throughout New England and around the world as essential to the quality and continued improvement of each school. Our current ***"Manual for School Improvement***" is attached to this letter. While it is clearly highly detailed, it should assist the Legislature to understand the thorough and comprehensive reality of NEASC Accreditation.

If additional information about the NEASC Standards and process would be helpful, we are always happy to speak with or testify before bodies considering legislation that would affect our membership.

Sincerely,

Cam Staples

Cameron Staples
President/CEO
New England Association of Schools and Colleges