



MASSACHUSETTS ASSOCIATION OF REGIONAL SCHOOLS

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MARS Testimony to Joint Ways and Means Committee March 29, 2017 Major Regional School District Issues

1. Budget Development – Regional School Districts
 - a. Most RSD must prepare budgets for spring approval of assessments
 - b. State budget usually follows in late June
 - c. Difficult to project state Chapter 70 aid and Transportation reimbursement – offset income to the budget
2. Massachusetts General Laws
 - a. Changes to municipal laws sometimes do not include RSD
3. Regional School Transportation Reimbursement
 - a. MGL Chapter 71, 16C
 - b. Reimbursement not aid
 - c. Subject to annual appropriation – State Budget
 - d. Funding at 70% not 100%
 - e. DESE data is two years old to determine the reimbursement amount – FY 16 expenses used for FY 18 budget line item
 - f. Currently there are 14 Regional Charter Schools eligible for transportation reimbursement
 - g. MARS Goal to get to 80% reimbursement level
4. Homeless Transportation
 - a. Direct required cost for a school district
 - b. Difficult to anticipate number of students that will become homeless in a school year
 - c. Transportation aid is not meeting the actual cost of transportation
5. Nonmember Vocational School Transportation
 - a. Students are eligible to attend a vocational school
 - b. Town or City required to pay for the transportation
 - c. Current budget line item not meeting the actual cost for this required service



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6. Declining student enrollment
 - a. In many parts of the Commonwealth schools are seeing a decline in student enrollment
 - b. Problem is complex
 - i. Economy is declining – fewer jobs and opportunities for employment
 - ii. General population is declining – fewer young families and more retirees on fixed incomes
 - iii. Fewer children being born
 - iv. Result in decline in enrollment
 - v. Impact of School Choice and Charter Schools
 - vi. Economic forecast is not good for some counties
 - vii. Population growth is largely in urban areas
7. MGL Chapter 70 Funding
 - a. Many RSD are only receiving the minimum increase in funding
 - b. Hold harmless funding of Chapter 70 is level funding
 - c. Foundation Budget Review Commission Recommendations
 - d. Difficult to project income from Chapter 70 for FY 18 budget
8. Increased costs to operate schools and limited new funding
 - a. Requirements of special education
 - b. Requirements for English Language Learners
 - c. Employee benefits – Health Insurance
 - d. Maintaining healthy schools
9. Study the current status of Regional School Districts
 - a. Four types of Regional School Districts
 - b. Fully K-12 Regions
 - c. Partial Regions – (9-12, 6-12)
 - d. Vocational Schools – Large number of communities served
 - e. Regional Charter Schools
10. Financial incentives to create and expand Regional School Districts
 - a. Currently limited financial incentives to create or expand a RSD
 - b. Not fully funding regional school transportation reimbursement
 - c. Regional Agreements vary as to how district assessments are determined to member communities
 - d. Goal to provide high quality education for all students is being limited by fiscal limits of the member communities