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Basic  
Education  
Commission  
Testimony



PENNSYLVANIA  

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ECONOMY LEAGUE  
Information, Insight, Integrity.



# School District Consolidation and Merger

- **Myth**
  - Saves money in the short-term.
- **Reality**
  - Likely costs money in the short-term
  - Faces significant impediments
- **Opportunities**
  - Maintain or grow programs
  - More robust curriculum, extracurriculars, etc.
  - Belief that it saves money in long-term and creates a stronger tax base
- **Drivers**
  - Declining enrollment
  - Fiscal problems
  - Loss/reduction of programs
- **Historical**
  - Mass consolidation in 1960s/70s shrunk from 2,361 districts to 500 districts
  - Created hard feelings
  - Only one consolidation/merger since then



## Impediments to Merger/Consolidation

- Cost to “level up” salaries and wages for teachers and others
- Different curriculum, educational philosophies, demographics
- Transportation challenges
  - Geographical impediments (mountains etc.)
  - Longer bus rides
  - Higher costs for longer routes
- Reconciling facilities and grades (elementary, middle, high school)
- Finances of partner districts
  - Deficits or large amount of debt is deterrent
- Cost of studies, plans and implementation
  - No dedicated state funding source
- School district provides local identity
  - The hardest animal to kill is a school mascot



## Recommendations

- Phased Approach
  - Share courses
  - Combine extracurriculars
  - Technology and existing models
  - Start at high school level
- PEL/PSBA check list or similar review
  - Potential partners
  - Self-assessment
- State Role
  - Consider current public process
  - Provide funds and incentives