



March 9, 2021

**Position Statement
Supporting
S-3488 (Sweeney, Gopal, O'Scanlon)**

Modifies certain procedures pertaining to school district regionalization; establishes grant program for cost reimbursement of conducting regionalization feasibility studies; and provides financial incentives for regionalization.

The New Jersey School Boards Association (NJSBA), a federation of all local school boards in the state, supports S-3488. The NJSBA supports voluntary school district efforts to regionalize when there are clear benefits for the students of the community. The decision to regionalize must be made by the local board and voters in each affected community.

S-3488 establishes criteria for state-funded regionalization studies, increases flexibility on regionalization cost apportionment, bars any regionalization that would encourage segregation, and provides financial incentives for districts losing state aid because of declining enrollment to regionalize by extending the schedule for their Adjustment Aid cuts. S-3488 establishes an eight-year phase-out of Adjustment Aid cuts — stretched out from the current four years — for districts participating in a LEAP (Local Efficiency Achievement Program) regionalization study that continues if the districts involved elect to implement a regionalization plan. Through 2028-2029, newly established K-12 regional districts would receive the greater of the state aid to which the newly established district would be entitled, or the sum of the aid of the consolidated districts including the eight-year Adjustment Aid phase-out. Most importantly, S-3488 ensures that the final decision to move forward with any regionalization plan remains subject to voter approval. This legislation represents a voluntary, incentive-based opportunity for districts to explore regionalization and determine if it would be a beneficial to their students and their communities.

The NJSBA urges the Senate Education Committee to approve S-3488 and looks forward to working with the sponsors and stakeholders as this bill moves through the Legislature.