



Five States Pass Resolutions of Support for the New England Secondary School Consortium

State Policy Makers Deliver a Powerful Endorsement of the Regional Initiative

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Legislators in Maine, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont unanimously passed joint resolutions of support for the New England Secondary School Consortium, a pioneering multistate partnership working to foster forward-thinking innovations in the design and delivery of secondary education across the region. **The five Consortium partner states of Connecticut, Maine, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont** are working in concert to close persistent achievement gaps, promote greater educational equity and opportunity for all students, and lead their educators into a new era of secondary learning.

The passage of formal joint resolutions in four different states during the same legislative session sends a powerful message of endorsement for the Consortium's overarching goal: *ensuring that every public high school student graduates prepared for success in the colleges, careers, and communities of the 21st century.*

In addition, **the Connecticut State Board of Education, on the recommendation of Commissioner Mark McQuillan, also voted unanimously to endorse the same resolution of support**, declaring "that we, the Members of the Connecticut State Board of Education, on behalf of the children we have been entrusted to represent, express our strong support and endorsement of the New England Secondary School Consortium and its goals, strategies and partnerships."

The multistate effort to develop and pass the resolutions was led by **Senator Lou DiPalma of Rhode Island, who is a member—along with the resolution sponsors in the other four states—of the New England Secondary School Consortium Council, the initiative's regional steering committee.** The Council includes state legislators, state board members, governor's representatives, prominent business leaders, and the commissioners of education from each Consortium state, in addition to at-large members from the New England Association of Schools and Colleges, the New England Board of Higher Education, and the Nellie Mae Education Foundation, the Consortium's funder along with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. The Great Schools Partnership, a nonprofit school-support organization based in Portland, Maine, is the Consortium's lead coordinator.

"We are setting our goals high to encourage big improvements in schools, and the only way to achieve these goals is for our states to make dramatic changes in the way we educate our young people. We can't expect 20th century models to remain relevant or effective for 21st century students, so we need to be willing—in our roles as elected officials, educators, business leaders, parents, and citizens—to consider ideas that may seem unconventional," said Senator DiPalma. "That's why my colleagues in the other New England states and I have sponsored this resolution: we want people to know that we have the leadership and political will needed to get this job done." **The effort to pass the resolution in the Rhode Island House was led by Representative Joseph McNamara**, also a member of the Council.

The resolution language reflects a large body of research showing that when education levels rise, incomes also go up, jobs multiply, tax revenues increase, health-care costs go down, more people vote, crime and incarceration rates drop, and charitable contributions and volunteerism rates rise, among other positive social and economic effects. Describing his rationale for sponsoring the resolution in the Maine House of Representatives, **Seth Berry, Maine's House Majority Whip and a veteran public school teacher of more than two decades**, said, "Business as usual is no longer good enough—it is time to retool. Building on student strengths today is the only way we will build up New England's economic strengths for tomorrow."

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Senator Justin Alfond, Representative Berry's fellow Consortium Council member and Co-Chair of Maine's Education and Cultural Affairs Committee, sponsored the resolution in the Maine Senate. Alfond is also the sponsor of a recent bill (LD 1658, An Act To Increase Maine's High School Graduation Rates) that outlines several ambitious strategies for increasing the number of Maine students graduating from high school, including raising the graduation rate to 90% by 2016—the same objective formally adopted by the Consortium.

By actively harnessing resources and expertise in the effort to bring greater coordination to the advancement of school-improvement programming, proven educational practices, effective policies, and higher learning expectations across New England, the Consortium works to promote the kind of systemic reforms that might otherwise be more difficult to achieve if states acted independently. "The work of the Consortium blends perfectly with Vermont's education initiatives, including the policy recommendations made last December by the State Board's Education Transformation Policy Commission," said **Representative Peter Peltz, sponsor of the Joint House Resolution in Vermont**, as well as a bill (H. 709) recently passed by the Vermont House that would establish a Prekindergarten–16 Council to recommend alignments and improvements in Vermont's educational system from early childhood through higher education. "What is most exciting and promising about the Consortium is the level of coordination it will bring to the five states," Peltz said.

"The New Hampshire State Senate strongly supports the New England Secondary School Consortium's collaborative initiatives and partnerships for the purpose of preparing every student for success in college and careers in the 21st century," said **Senator Molly Kelly, Chair of New Hampshire's Senate Education Committee**. "Our economic growth is directly related to education, and hence a prepared and educated work force is essential for our economic prosperity. This regional collaboration will strengthen New Hampshire's efforts in achieving success for every student." Senator Kelly's legislative colleague, **Representative Emma Rous, Chair of the House Education Committee and a member of the Consortium Council**, led the resolution's passage in the New Hampshire House of Representatives.

Additional Details

Connecticut

State Board of Education – **approved unanimously March 3, 2010**

RESOLVED, "That we, the Members of the Connecticut State Board of Education, on behalf of the children we have been entrusted to represent, express our strong support and endorsement of the New England Secondary School Consortium and its goals, strategies and partnerships."

Maine

Senate: **SP685** – **passed unanimously February 11, 2010**

House: **SP685** – **passed unanimously February 17, 2010**

Joint Resolution In Support of the New England Secondary School Consortium

Senate Sponsors: Justin Alfond, Elizabeth Schneider

House Sponsors: Seth Berry, Alan Casavant, Stephen Lovejoy, Mary Nelson, Helen Rankin, David Richardson, Patricia Sutherland, Joe Wagner

New Hampshire

Senate: **SJR3** – **passed unanimously March 10, 2010**

House – **passed by verbal consent April 21, 2010**

A Resolution In Support of the New England Secondary School Consortium

Senate Sponsor: Molly Kelly

House Sponsor: Emma Rous

Rhode Island

Senate: **S2173** – **passed unanimously February 9, 2010**

House: **H7684** – **passed unanimously February 25, 2010**

Joint Resolution Supporting the New England Secondary School Consortium

Senate Sponsors: Lou DiPalma, Beatrice Lanzi, Hanna Gallo, Daniel Connors, and M. Teresa Paiva-Weed

House Sponsors: Joseph McNamara, John Savage, Deborah Ruggiero

Vermont

Senate: **JRH34** – **passed unanimously March 17, 2010**

House: **JRH34** – **passed unanimously February 11, 2010**

Joint Resolution in Support of the New England Secondary School Consortium

House Sponsors: Peter Peltz, Gregory Clark, Johannah Donovan, Frank Geier, Anne Mook, Albert Pearce, Peter Perley, Linda Waite-Simpson, and John Zenie

For more information:

newenglandssc.org