

Released on: September 6, 2006

SMITH - 'MARYLAND COUNTY-BASED SCHOOLS COULD WORK IN NEW JERSEY'

TRENTON - Senator Bob Smith, D-Middlesex and Somerset, co-Chair of the Joint Legislative Committee on Government Consolidation and Shared Services, issued the following statement today regarding testimony provided to the panel about Maryland's county-based school system:

"As we explore every possibility to save taxpayer dollars, we should give very serious consideration to a county-based school system modeled after the one that is seeing great success in Maryland.

"When you look at the numbers, Maryland's population and demographics aren't too far off from our own. They have fewer students in the schools, but they actually have more kids enrolled in the federal school lunch program, indicating a higher level of poverty.

"When you look at the spending statistics, however, Maryland and New Jersey are like night and day.

"We spend \$12,500 on average per student for education, and 10 percent of the money spent on education goes to administrative costs. By contrast, Maryland spends \$9,200 per student, and only 2.68 percent is dedicated to administrative spending.

"If we're going to provide real, sustainable solutions to our perennial property tax woes, we need to put aside parochial concerns and figure out how to adapt a county-based school system, like the one that works in Maryland, to New Jersey. There's substantial savings to be had there, and the numbers cannot be ignored."