



## **HB 7 – Forced School Consolidation**

**House Bill 7 (Mayfield, D-Waukegan)** calls for the creation of the School District Efficiency Commission that would identify, before May 1, 2022, no less than 25% of school districts in Illinois that will be required to hold a referendum to consolidate in the next general election. It also requires the commission to establish local consolidated school district boundaries and maximum property tax rates for the newly proposed school districts.

### **Problems with HB 7**

- Local communities, parents, voters, and school boards should make the decision of the fate of their school districts
- Arbitrary triggers such as enrollment, district type, and geography created by people who do not live in the school district should not be used to force consolidation
- Mandatory consolidation created by the State ignores important local considerations such as tax rates, teacher salary schedules, and geography (e.g. time spent on buses each day)
- The National Education Policy Center (NEPC) report recommends “Avoid statewide mandates for consolidation and steer clear of minimum sizes for schools and districts. These always prove arbitrary and often prove unworkable.”
- Local citizens provide the majority of funding for public schools. They also know the local issues and have the most to lose.

### **Background**

When the issue of school consolidation was studied in the 2012 “Classrooms First Commission” and the 2015 “Local Government Consolidation and Unfunded Mandates Task Force” recommendations were made (supported by the Illinois Statewide School Management Alliance) that fell well short of mandatory and arbitrary school district consolidation, such as

- Educational shared service recommendations focused on increasing opportunity by aligning P-20 education and creating pathways for students to both graduate early and transition more quickly and easily from secondary school to post-secondary education and careers
- The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) would be provided flexibility to incentivize outcomes of school district consolidation
- Those districts most likely to benefit from reorganization would be identified to make it faster, easier and more economical for districts to reorganize voluntarily
- Local governments would be identified to continue to coordinate service offerings through intergovernmental agreements
- State agencies would be empowered to incentivize intergovernmental cooperation
- Recommendations would be proposed to identify ways for districts to streamline expenditures, in addition to (or in the absence of) reorganization and shared service agreements
- Recommendation would be proposed for the State to establish economies of scale to benefit local districts, from creating online resources for professional development, background checks, and adopting predictable budget cycles