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## **PRESS RELEASE**

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### **Senator Anne Gobi and Representative Kimberly Ferguson Reactivate Regional Schools Caucus**

**BOSTON** – State Senator Anne M. Gobi (D-Spencer) and State Representative Kimberly N. Ferguson (R-Holden) welcomed state legislators to participate in the newly re-vitalized Regional Schools Caucus. The caucus, which Senator Gobi and Representative Ferguson will serve as co-chairs, will bring together legislators with regional schooling in their districts to discuss issues specific to regional schools and advocate for resolutions. Ferguson and Gobi also encouraged legislators to bring their own concerns forward to the group, which intends to meet as needed when issues arise.

The Regional Schools Caucus has met sporadically over the years to discuss obstacles facing regional school districts. At the first meeting of the caucus, the primary topic was the funding of regional school transportation as the House and Senate budgets are currently being resolved in a conference committee. As an important source of local aid, the regional school transportation funding reimburses cities and towns for the transportation costs of students attending regional schools. Districts that receive a cut from this mandated account will be forced to make cuts or reallocate funds from other sources.

“I am pleased to work with Representative Ferguson and the members of the caucus to help bring regional school issues into focus,” said Senator Gobi. “There are 85 regional school districts in the State and their issues, while often similar to stand alone districts, have unique challenges.”

“After years of participating in the regional schools caucus, I’m happy to continue its work,” said Representative Ferguson. “Certainly there are plenty of issues to discuss which impact our regional schools across the state.”

The Senate budget, due to Senator Gobi's amendment, obtained \$59 million for Regional School Transportation, a \$2.5 million increase to the amount included in House budget. This funding amount puts the reimbursement rate above 70%. Regional school transportation costs are mandated by law to be reimbursed at 100% but have been funded at that level only once. The caucus will be sending a joint letter to Committee on Ways and Means chairs Senator Karen Spilka and Representative Brian Dempsey to request regional school transportation be funded at the Senate level in the FY16 state budget.

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