

Porzio, Bromberg & Newman Successfully Represents Sea Bright in NJ Supreme Court Regionalization Case

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By: Vito Gagliardi, Jr., Kerri Wright, Thomas Reilly

Porzio, Bromberg & Newman, in a case argued by Managing Principal Vito A. Gagliardi, Jr., achieved a major legal victory before the New Jersey Supreme Court on behalf of the Borough of Sea Bright. In a unanimous ruling, the Court confirmed that Sea Bright is legally authorized to petition for withdrawal from its current school districts and pursue a vote on school district regionalization under New Jersey's regionalization statute (N.J.S.A. 18A:13-47.11(a)).

The case, *In the Matter of the Verified Petition for the Proposed Creation of a PK-12 All-Purpose Regional School District by the Borough of Sea Bright (A-68-24)*, addressed whether Sea Bright could leave the Oceanport School District and Shore Regional High School District to join a proposed all-purpose regional district with Highlands, Atlantic Highlands, and Henry Hudson Regional High School.

The Supreme Court held that New Jersey's school district regionalization law applies to municipalities like Sea Bright, even those previously merged with another district. The decision rejected arguments that Sea Bright's merger with Oceanport barred independent action, emphasizing that the statute was designed to promote flexibility and efficiency in forming regional school districts.

"This ruling is a major step forward for Sea Bright and for communities seeking innovative solutions to deliver quality education and save taxpayer dollars," said Gagliardi. "We are proud to have helped clarify the law and secure this important right for our client."

Porzio's Education and Employment Team Co-Chairs Gagliardi and Kerri A. Wright and counsel Thomas J. Reilly represented Sea Bright. The decision clears the way for Sea Bright to petition the Commissioner of Education for approval to have a public referendum with neighboring towns for authorization to join or expand a regional district, advancing the Legislature's goal of cost-effective, high-quality education through regionalization.