

---

## TESTIMONY

**Testimony To:** Senate Committee on Education

**Respectfully Submitted by:** Lindsey Hedges

**Subject:** **H.461, An act relating to making miscellaneous changes in education laws**

**Date:** April 4, 2023

---

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on the topic of H.461, the House miscellaneous education bill.

I am here today to give an overview of the administration's position on each section of the House miscellaneous education bill, H.461. The Agency is supportive of and has requested the language in many of the sections within this bill. These changes aim to streamline processes and increase equity in service delivery.

### Section by Section Recommendations

The Agency and the Administration support the House passed version of many of the following sections with no recommended changes.

#### Sections 1-3: Shared School District Data Management System

Sections 1-3 repeal the mandatory implementation of the Shared School District Data Management System (SSDDMS). Sections 1 and 2 strike the language that made this program mandatory, passed by the General Assembly in 2018. Section 3 removes a quarterly reporting requirement that was added in the 2021 session.

These sections return the SSDDMS to a voluntary program. The Agencies of Education and Digital Services made the recommendation to strike the mandate based on difficulties with implementation and migration to the SSDDMS software system. More background on these challenges can be found in the December 2022 [legislative report](#) issued by both Agencies.

With repeal of the mandate, Vermont supervisory unions (SU/SD) may still choose to adopt and migrate to the SSDDMS, and existing users may choose to use another system. The State will continue to support the SSDDMS software system for all SUs that choose to continue to use it. All Vermont SU/SDs must still use the [Uniform Chart of Accounts](#) accounting system.



## **Section 4: National Guard Tuition Benefit Program**

Section 4 introduces a National Guard tuition benefit program for students attending any Vermont State College institution. This Section adds a provision to [16 V.S.A. § 2857](#), the National Guard Tuition Benefit Program originally established in Act 11 of 2018 (Special Session), to allow participants in the program to attend out of state colleges and universities if the program they are enrolled in is not offered by a Vermont higher education institution. The tuition rate shall be the in-state tuition for the University of Vermont.

While the Agency of Education is not directly involved in the administration of this program, the Administration supports this addition, as well as any other provisions that supports current or future Vermont National Guard members.

## **Section 5: Home Study**

Section 5 amends the home study statutes ([16 V.S.A. § 166b](#)). The Agency requested this language to streamline the application process for home study families, align us with neighboring states, and reduce the paperwork process for both families and the Agency.

My colleague, General Counsel Emily Simmons, will provide separate testimony on this section.

## **Section 6: Ethnic and Social Equity Standards Advisory Working Group**

Section 6 extends the deadline for the work of the Ethnic and Social Equity Standards Advisory Working Group, also known as the Act 1 Working Group. The changes in this section extend the deadlines of the working group to allow them to wrap up their work by this summer, June 30, 2023. The previous statutory deadline (December 2022) has now passed. The Agency supports this work and the additional time needed to make sure that the group can complete its work in a way that supports the importance of, and effort put into this initiative.