



TO: Senate Education Committee

FROM: Cara Zimmerman, Director of Policy Services and Legislative Affairs,
Vermont School Boards Association

RE: H.871 - An act relating to the development of an updated State aid to
school construction program

DATE: April 4, 2024

Good afternoon, I am Cara Zimmerman, Director of Policy Services and Legislative Affairs with the Vermont School Boards Association. Thank you for inviting me to testify in support of H.871, an act relating to the development of an updated State aid to school construction program.

Our members adopted a resolution on general education construction that reads “[t]he moratorium on school construction aid should be removed. Schools require predictability and stability in state aid in order to plan successfully over the long term.” The moratorium on school construction aid has significantly contributed to a backlog of school construction projects and the decline of school facilities conditions statewide. This has resulted in less safe and less healthy learning environments, as well as disparities in the quality of education between better-resourced communities and high-need districts. Just to put the urgency in context - 61.1% of Vermont public schools are nearing the end of their useful or serviceable life.

We support H.871 because it puts Vermont onto a path to address the urgent and significant school facilities needs in a thoughtful and systematic way. We spent significant time following this bill’s development in the House Education Committee and feel that the process was a good one.

As you may be aware, the language from H.873, an act relating to financing the testing for and remediation of the presence of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) in schools, was

in earlier versions of H.871. VSBA strongly advocates for a pause in the PCB testing program so that PCBs can be addressed alongside a comprehensive statewide plan for addressing school construction.

Thank you.