



TO: Senate Education Committee

FROM: Sue Ceglowski, Executive Director, Vermont School Boards Association

RE: S. 203 - An act relating to the appointment of State Board of Education members

DATE: February 16, 2024

Good afternoon, I am Sue Ceglowski, Executive Director of the Vermont School Boards Association. Thank you for inviting me to testify on S.203, an act relating to the appointment of State Board of Education members.

As you know, current law assigns the sole responsibility of appointing all members of the State Board of Education to the Governor. VSBA believes that the process set out in S. 203 offers a more inclusive and equitable approach to the appointment process. Under the proposed bill, the Governor retains the authority to appoint four members to the State Board of Education. This maintains executive influence in the selection process while also allowing for broader representation in the process by granting the Senate Committee on Committees and the Speaker of the House responsibility to appoint members. The proposed approach to appointments encourages more diverse and inclusive representation on the State Board of Education by adding more voices and perspectives to the selection process. A State Board of Education with diverse membership not only reflects the rich tapestry of Vermont communities but also fosters a collaborative environment where varied viewpoints contribute to the development of well-rounded educational policies that address the diverse needs of our students.

VSBA recognizes that the State Board of Education (and Agency of Education) play a vital role in our education system, as demonstrated in the following resolution on the role of the state in education:

*The VSBA believes that the role of the State Board of Education and the State Agency of Education is:*

- 1. To guide the creation of a broad design for the education system in a rapidly changing world where information is no longer confined to books or geographic locations. The broad design must include a focus on: assuring success for every student; supporting a new vision for teaching and learning; engaging and supporting families and communities; delivering and using world-class technology; and providing effective leadership.*
- 2. To provide support for local boards in their efforts to design and implement the best possible educational program.*
- 3. To promote equity of educational opportunity for students throughout Vermont.*
- 4. To provide assistance when requested by individual school districts and local boards to help them meet statewide per-pupil spending goals.*

*In order to accomplish these goals, the Agency of Education must be properly staffed and resourced. VSBA desires to be a strong partner with the State Board of Education in overseeing Vermont's education system. VSBA believes that the State Board should include an active school board member, an administrator and a teacher. The Governor should consult with the VSBA in the selection of the school board member.*

As such, we support the proposed new requirement that State Board of Education members include at least one member with expertise or experience as a principal, superintendent, teacher, school board member, educator preparation program provider, special education provider, and parent.

I should note that this fall, our members adopted a resolution charging VSBA staff with convening a task force to assess the needs of our school districts, examine whether the State Board of Education and Agency of Education are meeting those needs today, and develop recommended actions for the Governor and legislature. We have convened the task force and expect that they will wrap up their work next fall, with the goal of completing a report by November. VSBA might have some additional recommendations in that report.