



To: Senate Committee on Education

From: Jay Nichols, Executive Director

Date: April 3, 2024

Subject: H. 630: An Act related to boards of cooperative education services as passed by the Vermont House of Representatives.

For the record, Jay Nichols, Executive Director the Vermont Principals' Association.

Section 1:

The VPA believes that it is time that Vermont have cooperative educational service agencies and we note that the vast majority of U.S. states already have some version of this governance structure in place. Given our strong propensity for local control, the small school district governance systems we have, and our rurality; having a system like this in play that is voluntary for supervisory districts and supervisory unions makes perfect sense.

We note here that although there are many opportunities for shared services especially in the area of fiscal consolidation opportunities, we are especially optimistic about the potential for special education services that may allow for specialized programs to be developed within state that will save school districts money and keep many of our most vulnerable students in Vermont with appropriate level of services.

Section 2:

No specific comments on this section except to say that it is important to make sure that the Cost-Benefit Analysis process that is required needs to be as simple and straightforward as possible. We need to be careful to not create additional red-tape that will serve as a deterrent to systems for taking advantage of these potential opportunities. Other than that, we believe the House Education Committee specifically did an incredibly thorough job of preparing this piece of legislation.

Section 3:

This makes sense to us. We like the idea of encouraging the boces system and checking in to see how it develops over the next few years. In this way, we can make evidence-based decisions as to whether expanding and/or mandating membership is an appropriate path forward.

Section 4:

Agreed. No comments.

Section 5:

No comments.

Section 6:

No comments.

Section 7:

No comments.

Section 8:

This is important for employee protection.

Section 9:

Ok this makes sense.

Section 10:

No comments.

Section 11:

No comments.

Section 12:

No comments

Final thoughts:

I see this as a potential great opportunity for Vermont but I am not convinced that Districts will take full advantage of this opportunity. It will be important to examine what occurs over the next few years and to revisit. It might be necessary to offer some incentives in the future to encourage these types of partnerships.