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Vermont House Education Committee

Chair Donovan, members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to address this committee on the important legislation you are crafting, which I wholeheartedly support. I want to make clear that the views expressed here are my own.

I am a seventh-generation Vermonter who taught in public elementary schools in New York State for 33 years. I have been a school board member in Vermont for the past nine years.

Your Outline contains exactly the right remedy to our current school governance issues: *one board for each superintendent, voluntarily if possible, imposed if necessary.*

Unification per se won't save much money, but it makes it possible for the school board to configure school buildings in ways that do save money, by allowing staffing to better track declining enrollment. Such configuration can also benefit students.

Your Outline would eventually mandate the same school board consolidation for elementary schools that we have long had for high schools and middle schools.

Suggestions:

1. Page 24 line 16 and 17 of the Outline version 5.1 empowers the Design Team to produce a Statewide Plan that would include defining "the conditions under which the Expanded District would be authorized to close a school building." I would argue that the Expanded District board ought to have guaranteed broad powers to design school configuration. There may be political pressure to give

the town in which a school resides veto power over its closing. Such power needs to be denied, first, because it once again defines the town as a unit of school governance. Secondly, such veto power would tie the hands of the school board in its efforts to design a school building configuration that benefits students and taxpayers.

2. I would suggest that language be inserted in the bill to mandate proportional representation on the Expanded District board, similar to the way current union district boards are constituted. Alternatively, board members could be elected at-large.

It is time for the legislature to act. Vermont cannot move education into the 21st century with a school governance structure from the 19th century.