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I wear two hats in this discussion. One as a school board member for Mount Mansfield Union High School district, the other as a school nurse at Essex High School and Center for Technology. In both of those roles I support a Pre K-12 governance system.

I am a nurse currently working in a high school. My focus in the conversation in this role is our students, few if any are in this room to speak for themselves. I am thinking of those students I work with daily who struggle to attend school, are not engaged or invested in the education we are providing. That process of disengagement starts much earlier, even in the primary grades. School boards must have a structure that allows them to discuss the community they serve Pre K-12 to allow us to make the changes for innovative, alternative and forward thinking educational opportunities. The best decisions come from good data and information. We need to have everyone at the table at the same time in a consistent fashion to manage the education needs of the community, not just the education needs of one school. The current SU governance structure does not adequately provide for meaningful and consistent discussion, planning and evaluation. The system is fragmented and does not encourage coordination of services.

I am a school board member in a SU that has maximized the centrally provided services it can, yet efficiency, accountability, and proper utilization of personnel resources continue to elude us. Cutting budgets to meet tax objectives is certainly leaving no room for creative and innovative programs to meet the needs of students. **There is a large gap between the stakeholder's vision of education for Vermont and the reality in front of us.**

The concept of Pre K-12 governance systems was certainly a lot easier to discuss before there was a bill in front of us. Now there seems to be an objection to be found for all. I find the objections continue to center around what the adult stakeholders believe they will lose such as control of a single school budget, civic participation in town meeting, connection to the voters of the town. What students will actually lose remains conjecture as many, many students from many varieties and sizes of schools all over the country have thrived and been

successful in life. **It is not the school size or governance structure that dictates inevitable success or failure of our students.**

Keeping the conversation on what we fear we will lose is preventing us from focusing on the central issue of improving the education system both in the quality of programs and the method of funding. I find it fascinating and odd that we keep ascribing adult needs and thought processes to a problem of improving a service for children. They are much more flexible than we are.

What I like about H.883 is its intent, the time frame, the consideration of choice, the options for waivers and configurations. What concerns me is that the enactment of the bill may divert attention away from another big issue, the need for an education finance overhaul.

In a perfect world I would have our education dollars fund the student, not the town or the school. If our education finance system continues to focus on funding **schools** and penalizes or rewards **towns**, then schools and towns become the turf to protect. If we want to turn our state towards an integrated system of multiple types of schooling meeting the high standards of learning and high levels of student engagement we say we desire, then we need to turn our focus to funding the student. Viewed in this light, it becomes natural to talk about larger Pre K-12 systems with multiple choices in educational settings. And no, I do not have the answer to the long commutes that may be found in the more rural areas but as I said, in a perfect world....

As a school nurse, a school board member and parent of two children who have finally graduated from Vermont's public school system despite one having major difficulties, I support H.883 and will continue to push for a clearer, equitable and more transparent education funding system.