

**Testimony Offered by Stephen Dale, Executive Director, VSBA  
April 10, 2014**

**THE CONCERN ABOUT DUAL ENROLLMENT  
FOR INDEPENDENT SCHOOL STUDENTS**

**Introduction**

I am here today to testify regarding dual enrollment for students enrolled in independent schools. Although I understand that H876 is very limited in scope, I want to put the VSBA position in perspective by going back to the heart of the Dual Enrollment bill and the assumptions that underlie it.

The VSBA has been very supportive of dual enrollment being available to every student enrolled in a public school, as part of the public school program, despite the fact that, over time, it will involve some increased costs. This can be a very important part of personalizing education and offering expanded opportunities.

When the requirement was added last year, it called for State to pay for it for the first couple of years, and that in year three and beyond, the cost would be split between the state and local districts. If the state doesn't provide its share, the entitlement does not exist.

One of the stated objectives was that schools, over time, would need to alter their high school programs to absorb this new cost. For example, a number of students would be taking the new programs rather than the traditional programs, allowing for a budget reconfiguration several years out.

We will see if that assumption matches reality, but there was a legitimate case to be made regarding the funding and we remain optimistic.

**Dual enrollment for Independent School Enrollees**

For towns that have full choice, you decided last year to allow students who attend an independent school with district support to participate in dual enrollment. We continue to have concerns about that decision in that the assumptions around long-term costs do not hold

together for that group. The costs will be additive for the district-- payment for the independent school AND payment for dual enrollment.

Our belief is that when a parent chooses a private school, they are choosing a different option with a different set of programs-- some of them more robust and some less. There should not be an assumption that if you choose the private option that you will also receive an extra benefit paid for by the district. Dual enrollment should only be an option if you choose the Public Option.

### **The Current Bill**

The current bill, as I understand it, covers families who live in a town that has a public school, but chooses to disenroll the child and enroll in a private school at their own expense. That is a choice they make, but they should then not expect the local school or the state to pay for dual enrollment. They get a set of other options that may be more robust in other areas, but they cannot get this added service at the expense of the Town.

Although H876 says that a local school district will not be responsible for any part of the bill for these privately enrolled students, we are concerned with the fact that the state portion continues to be available. It is our understanding that if those state dollars are exhausted, students enrolled in public school could be denied the benefit. We should not be opening up this program in this way.

### **Summary**

In summary, dual enrollment is part of the public school program, and funded as such. We should not be expanding programs and costs for local boards when they have no control over the expenses and should not be allowing students attending private schools to compete for limited "match" dollars.