

February 26, 2014
Senate Education Committee

Testimony – Jeffrey Francis, Executive Director, Vermont Superintendents Association

S. 175 - An act relating to permitting a student to enrolled in a Vermont public school after moving to a new school district.

- I regard this testimony as preliminary because I do not believe that there is enough information available yet to fully weigh in on the policy matters under consideration. I believe that Vermont Agency of Education should be asked to undertake a thorough review of the proposed legislation and the issues that are the basis for it, and make a recommendation to the Committee with respect to how to proceed. I believe that after the Agency has provided a recommendation to the Committee, various parties of interest will be in a better position to weigh in on the proposal.
- The bill proposes to: Authorize a student who is enrolled in a Vermont public school district and remain enrolled in the original school for the remainder of the school year. The bill would also authorize the two school districts to permit the student permit the student to retain legal residency for a subsequent year of years. During a period of retained residency, the two school districts would have whatever rights and responsibilities they would have had if the student where physically domiciled in the original district, except that the original district would not be required to provide transportation.

In summary:

- Continuity of the educational process and experiences for students is a useful and purposeful goal, especially when a student is at risk.
- Many superintendents report that when there is a change in residency they work across school districts in order to provide that continuity.
- To the best of my knowledge, there is not centralized data on the number of transient students moving from district to district on an annual basis. The impetus for the bill, as I understand it, is an interest on the part of some school systems to provide continuity in the education process by establishing law or policy that would grant a right to remain in a school district after a student's residency changed. In some instances this ability is provided but it is not consistent across districts (even within the same supervisory union) and this ability is not required under current law.
- Previous and planned testimony by other witnesses cites a wide array of issues and considerations associated with residency issues. Those issues include the potential for injecting confusion and uncertainty into the residency determination process, implications for the special education delivery system and potential effects on school choice arrangements. These issues must be carefully examined.
- I believe that a careful analysis of this issue by the Agency of Education will inform whether legislation is in fact needed to address the need to provide continuity of learning experience for a student within a given school year. However, the magnitude of the problem and the appropriate scope of response are in question at this time.