

Hi, my name is Nava Crispe and I'm currently in 11th grade at Long Trail School in Dorset.

Due to the recent news that Vermont school choice is in jeopardy, I felt that it is my responsibility to share my own beliefs as to why such a decision would be a catastrophic mistake. Additionally, I hope to explain why many students who utilize school choice, such as myself, value it and greatly appreciate living in a state that offers such a great option for our education.

As you are aware, many small and rural towns in Vermont simply can't afford to financially support a high-quality education for their youth. School choice has enabled me to receive a better education without the economic burden of paying for full tuition. Instead of attending the public school closest to my home in Danby, I've been privileged to attend Long Trail instead. Not only has Long Trail provided me with an excellent education, but it has nurtured me, inspired me, developed me as both a student and a person, and allowed me to thrive in an environment that suits me best, one that I would NOT have had if I was in a much larger public school.

Without school choice, the majority of students and their families at Long Trail would be afflicted by choosing whether to commit to an annual substantial cost so that they are able to attend, or to go instead to whichever public academic institution is available - regardless if it's considered to provide a good education, resources, and social atmosphere. Long Trail would obviously not be the sole victim if school choice is not retained. The impact of an end to school choice would bring about unprecedented change to the existence of private schools in Vermont, and moreover, the students attending them.

Furthermore, the population of Vermont has an average age of 57.3 years old. With many on the verge of retiring, there are not enough young Vermonters to replace jobs. Without school choice, the already minuscule younger population will only dramatically decline. Why would people with a family find moving to Vermont as appealing if there would be a dramatic decrease in good school options that aren't too costly? Why would people already living in Vermont stay, if their children wouldn't have as many options as they would in other states? A friend of mine's family moved from California to take advantage of Vermont's school choice and to attend Long Trail. So many of us rely on school choice to be able to be at the school we want to be at, it wouldn't be fair to take that liberty away from us.

Either my school would need to shut down as a result of a significant loss to its already-small student body and because it would be unable to provide enough scholarships for the amount of students that would be seeking them if school choice was lost, or, if school choice is continued, it can maintain its reputation for being an amazing school that its students love and flourish in.

It's hard enough living in a state where there aren't a lot of kids or opportunities for kids to take hold of. Don't get me wrong, I love Vermont and personally think its natural beauty and warm community are sufficient reasons to live here. But, despite this, one of the things I love most about it is that it has given me the chance to go to Long Trail with school choice. After years of attending a variety of schools (ranging from cyber school to public school) in an attempt to find one that I truly liked, I found it. I've been academically challenged, pushed to succeed, and fortunate to participate in the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme at the only school in Vermont that offers it.

I'm aware that if school choice is discontinued it would not affect me, as I would've graduated by the time it is put into effect. Despite this, I urge you to support legislation that allows current school choice towns to choose to retain their traditional choice status when merging with districts that operate public schools. Not for me, but for the many other Vermonters that would be affected negatively if the decision to cancel school choice is made.

I greatly appreciate you reading this and I hope that you will consider it when finalizing your decisions on Vermont's school choice. I'm proud to be an eleventh-generation Vermonter who lives in a state where I can express my voice and be heard, so thank you!