

To: The House Education Committee
From: Mary E. Moran, Superintendent, Rutland City Public Schools
Date: January 6, 2016
Re: **Act 46 Testimony**

CAPS:

Budgeting, while annual, is not really an annual matter. Any single year can be out of context (i.e. use of surplus for a one-time event, especially in a smaller school: roof, new bus, unforeseen student expense, etc.). Reacting to enrollment declines is not an annual process. Spending can be “lumpy,” especially in smaller schools. As you well know, various mandates also impact school spending. CAPS are like slamming on the brakes in a car rather than designing a car that has built-in, ongoing speed controls.

The Rutland City Public School district has been progressive and frugal for many years.

- Capital Improvement Plan (all roofs, underground tanks, and bonds for major projects)
- Energy Performance Contracting
- Net reduction of 28 jobs in the past 5 years
- Regularly among the lowest central office admin. costs in the State: 62 of 62 this year.

Our budget will go up 1.9%; and, based on the latest figures from the AOE, our tax rate will go down an estimated 5.2 cents for FY17. New grant supported expenses, the introduction of a Pre-K program and six job reductions are the reasons for these figures this year.

Clearly, we can and do accomplish economies of scale as a single Pre-K-12 school district that may not be possible in some supervisory union structures.

RCPS is now a mid-spender, which was the goal of Brigham after all. When I first came to Rutland 20 years ago, we spent \$3500/student while some of our neighbors were spending \$12,000/student. Our children had little or no fine arts or world language in the lower grades, limited co-curricular offerings, class sizes were in the mid to upper 20's at some levels; I could go on.....

CAPS penalize low spending districts. Equity is placed under fire as a result, in my opinion.

Rather than the blunt instrument/hard brakes of the Act 46 CAPS, why not use the existing Excess Spending feature of current law? This is a more measured, multi-year process to moderate spending. Perhaps lower the excess spending limit to 115% or, even 110% going forward...?

GOVERNANCE:

I would not want the controversy around the CAPS, which I oppose, to have an adverse impact on the many very positive efforts that are being made around the state on the matter of governance/consolidation projects. Those with which I am familiar are entering into the important work of seeking to improve both equity and opportunity for the children of Vermont through possible mergers and/or consolidation. We saw that on display in our region at the State Board meeting just before the holiday break at which RSSU, RNESU and ACSU presented their

governance reports, all of which were passed, unanimously, by the SBE. That work should continue to be undertaken and supported.