

When Act 46 was being considered and debated, assurances were made to legislators that school choice towns would be able to merge with operating districts and maintain their historic choice. As such promises were made to constituents, who now also feel betrayed.

Act 46 is being implemented in a way that is not consistent with the intent of the legislature that passed it. This committee has an obligation to your colleagues and to all of our constituents to pass a fix to Act 46 IMMEDIATELY that allows for school choice towns to maintain their choice while being able to fully participate in the merger process — as we were promised and as we intended when passing this bill into law.

Already, Westford, Elmore, Fairfield and Tinmouth have lost School choice. Several other towns are going through the process and many towns that consolidate are going to also lose their school choice.

This is not a Democrat against Republican issue at the moment. 94 towns in Vermont are directly affected because they have enjoyed school choice for 150 years. These are town represented by a large number of your Democrat colleagues. But it is not limited to 94 Towns. Because any town that now has school choice and loses school choice has a direct impact on surrounding towns that were receiving kids from that sending community.

We need to fix this this year, much like you fixed the caps, which by way, was one of the sole reasons many of us supported the bill in the first place. To me, the elephant in the living room is this. Is this committee's intent to do away with School Choice and this has all been a smoke and mirrors game. If so, we want to know exactly what we are dealing with and we want Vermonters to know exactly what they are dealing with. I hope this isn't the case.

We want an opportunity to fix this problem now. Not have to play games on it and try to get amendments ruled germane on the floor. We want a fix for Vermonters. If this isn't going to happen this year, Vermonters will need to know why and it will be a campaign issue if we don't resolve it.

I just want to know if this is something we can resolve this year. That's why I'm here today.