

Testimony from Ken Page, Executive Director of the Vermont Principals' Association in response to a request from the committee about where we stand on the Ed. Governance Bill, Tuesday, April 21, 2015

Today is six weeks since my spinal stenosis surgery. I am happy just to be here now talking with you about this because I thought I would have to be out much longer.

I will make my comments brief:

1. Now is the time
2. Some sort of careful governance change needs to happen to assure equity across our state
3. We at VPA are supportive of the conversations around ed. reform, but not necessarily the mandates. We believe in essence that carrots work better than sticks.
4. We need to enact changes because we want better opportunities for all of our students at a price that Vermont taxpayers can afford.
5. At the heart of the conversation are equity, quality and efficiency; not power, authority and a "leave us alone" attitude.

Last year, The Vermont Principals' Association Executive Council took a formal position on H. 883. It read:

"The Vermont Principals' Association Executive Council is fully in support of the intention of House Bill H. 883. As we approach our 100th year anniversary, we are keenly aware now more than ever of the need to improve opportunities for all of Vermont students, and for adults to work together to realize the value, efficiency and common sense of slightly expanded governance units. We pledge our leadership, our experience and our abilities as educational leaders to this vital ground-breaking effort."

You may recall that I participated in a successful district merger in Waterbury and Duxbury in 1996. We opened a new school; we closed small Duxbury Elementary School; we hired over 150 staff members for our new schools; we endured scorn; we made people nervous; clearly, we did not catch all of the problems at first, but we adjusted. And we saved the taxpayers millions and put our communities in good shape for the future.

Let me be clear. The Vermont Principals Association is supportive of this bill and we hope that it advances, because it the right thing for our kids. The problem as we see it is an adult problem, not a student problem. You won't have kids saying they don't want more opportunities.

To sum up: I have written these comments to over 500 school leaders in the last few days:

- 1. Now is the time**
- 2. Some sort of careful governance change needs to happen to assure equity across our state**
- 3. We at VPA are supportive of the conversations around ed. reform, but not necessarily the mandates. We believe in essence that carrots work better than sticks.**
- 4. We need to enact changes because we want better opportunities for all of our students at a price that Vermont taxpayers can afford.**
- 5. At the heart of the conversation are equity, quality and efficiency; not power, authority and a “leave us alone” attitude.**

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak to the committee.