

Senator Ashe and the Finance Committee,

My name is Morgan MacIver. I am on the Vermont State Board of Education and Senior at Twinfield Union School. I'm here today in regard to Bill H. 361

My time at Twinfield has taught me school performance, not size, is the greatest indicator of educational quality. I've attended Twinfield since preschool and will be graduating this June with 25 of my peers, several with whom I started preschool. I'm thankful to have had so many opportunities for high quality education at my small school. I spent many years working with YATST (Youth and Adults Transforming Schools Together), now Up For Learning, helping to build student voice and authentic youth adult partnership in schools. I was trained as a facilitator, facilitated and presented to large groups at conferences and was asked to be on their YATST board. This experience ultimately led me to seek the role on the State Board my sophomore year.

There is a myth that small schools do not offer enough options. At Twinfield, the Renaissance program has been functioning since 1999. It gives all students at Twinfield the opportunity to study and experience any topic under the sun in any learning mode. Students design research studies, internships, project-based studies and even, travel with purpose. Before the dual enrollment program started, students were able to audit college courses through Renaissance. This year three students who were studying statistics through Renaissance will be taking the AP statistics exam. 70% of ALL Twinfield high school students individually design 1 or more studies by the time they graduate.

When I was a freshman, I had a goal to learn how to keep myself healthy. I wanted to learn about nutrition and organic foods. I enhanced my study by researching genetically modified foods (GMOs). I was introduced to the food labeling efforts in the legislature and the following year interned with the Vermont Public Interest Research Group. I helped with and even testified for their campaign for H.112, Vermont's GMO labeling law. Through the Renaissance program I've also been able to study American Sign Language, Feng Shui, education philosophy, vegan cooking and Kundalini yoga. I have formed deep relationships with experts in their fields that will last for years, if not a lifetime.

Renaissance and other personalized learning programs around the state offer high quality options for students. And, since this is the finance committee, I should mention that programs like Renaissance around the state are inexpensive. Many mentors volunteer their time or are paid a small stipend.

Without the support and opportunities Twinfield provided me throughout my thirteen years of schooling I surely wouldn't be where I am today. College was not a reality for either of my parents, and wouldn't have been for me if not for the opportunities provided me by Twinfield; the close relationships with my teachers, personalized learning and above all the encouragement and support to follow my dreams. Thanks to Twinfield my dreams of college and traveling are coming true.

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Please, before you pass this bill, take time to study how schools around the state are already meeting the Education Quality Standards and hold ALL schools accountable for the costs of high quality learning opportunities and not just small ones as this bill currently does.