

To Governor Shumlin, our Windham County legislators and members of the Vermont State Senate and House, Secretary Holcombe and the Agency of Education, and the State Board of Education:

The members representing the six school districts of the Windham Southeast Supervisory Union Board issue this statement regarding the proposed H.361 legislation.

We are deeply concerned about proposed content and implications of H.361 which empowers the State Board of Education to determine the existence of our local school boards, and sets arbitrary spending caps without consideration of the true effects on the districts.

We are concerned that:

Student and school performance data is not incorporated or referenced in the proposed legislation as a comparative means of evaluating a school's and/or district's overall success.

Conditions that are known to affect learning outcomes, such as the proportion of students in poverty and students eligible for an IEP have not formed a part of any assessment of what is now being called "efficiency" in education.

The arbitrary spending caps as proposed will be imposed on all districts, with no consideration of the steps taken by individual districts to seek out and implement fiscal efficiencies and programming improvements. These include in our own area, existing voluntary cooperation with neighboring towns both inside and outside of the supervisory union.

Further, no consideration is given to the considerable influence of current and proposed unfunded state and federal legislation (special education costs, food program requirements, pre-K - 12 programs), or for existing contractual obligations (contracts with teachers, food service, transportation companies), or for market fluctuations of necessary budgeted costs like heating fuel and other utilities.

We are concerned that the Agency of Education is not funded or staffed sufficiently to acquire a comprehensive view of the many schools and districts with a history of successful approaches to financial management and innovative educational programs.

While we oppose this bill in its present form, the member districts of the Windham Southeast Supervisory Union pledge to work with the Vermont Legislature, the Agency

WSESU resolution on H.361 adopted on this 7th day of April, 2015 at the full meeting of the Board

of Education, the State Board of Education and other Vermont school districts to lead in positive change by working collaboratively with all interested parties to seek solutions that are based on sound fiscal management, real data, and educational best practices

We will continue to seek and improve our own fiscal efficiencies and educational programs, while promoting collaboration within and outside of our member districts.

We will also continue to provide information to governing bodies and legislators on any far reaching effects of our efforts to achieve these efficiencies and disseminate to all interested parties those successful strategies.

Respectfully submitted,

The members of Windham Southeast Supervisory Union Board representing:

Brattleboro Town School District
Brattleboro Union High School District
Dummerston Town School District
Guilford Town School District
Putney Town School District
Vernon Town School District