

To: Whom it may concern in the Vermont Legislature

From: Suraj Kushwaha, senior at Mount Mansfield Union High school, resident of Huntington, Vermont

Concerning: The shift from Supervisory Union to Consolidated District school governance

Dear members of the Vermont Legislature,

Recently there has been a debate over the redistricting and consolidation of our schools' administrative bodies. Proponents argue that such consolidation is necessary in the face of declining enrollment and increasing costs. While these are certainly issues that warrant reform, we must proceed with much more caution and critical thinking.

I have noticed several issues that evoke deep concern when I consider the long-term future of our state's education:

Firstly, does it not defeat the purpose of saving money to offer tax incentives just to go through with consolidation? This is unfortunately reminiscent of wandering in circles and getting nowhere.

Secondly, consolidation encourages standardization, simply because it is easier for fewer people to manage a more standardized body. Education has already been regimented and standardized to the point where it's not nearly as engaging and efficacious as it should be. I urge you not to propagate this issue by instituting a system that favors standardization and so called "efficiency." Yes, having fewer people in charge is surely more "efficient." But it goes against the democratic spirit that our nation, and we in Vermont especially, have so valiantly upheld.

On a more ideological note, when we create unwarranted infrastructure for power, even if *we* have the absolute best of intents, we create the potential for that power to be abused in the future. And the abuse of power is only the worst case scenario; there is still the question of responsibility. Why are we thrusting more responsibility onto fewer people? Surely, with all of the issues in education today, responsibility for the students of one high school and two middle schools is more than enough for a board of fifteen people. To add to this an array of young students from six elementary schools—students at the height of their mental and emotional malleability—seems absolutely preposterous and, moreover, irresponsible on our part. The above example is what happened this past November in Chittenden East, my own school district. The unified board of fifteen members—the board size was not increased—assumed responsibility for all elementary schools save for, I am happy to say, Huntington's Brewster Pierce Memorial School.

At the heart of the matter, by forcing or urging consolidation, we are sacrificing the educational interests of our children for monetary savings. This is unsustainable in itself because the children who suffer a lack of attention—a lack of attention because their elementary schools did not have their own, personalized board to deal with specific issues and improve education on the most local level—will turn around and likely become a burden on society in the future.

You are faced with the most difficult task of solving our problems with funding. While I do not have the answer to this predicament, I urge you to explore and be creative with other solutions. It seems that our method for funding education itself may be flawed. Investigate how we might reshape this method into something more fair that does not sacrifice the interests of future generations.

Thank you kindly for all your hard work,

Suraj Kushwaha