



Vermont
Superintendents
Association

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Senate Education Committee
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Testimony on H. 859 – Education; Special Education Funding

The Vermont Superintendents Association supports H. 859.

The bill will achieve three outcomes:

1. It will modify existing statutes to update language to reflect the delivery system for special education through the supervisory union/district in conformance with Act 153. Note: Superintendents and other school officials are reporting that delivery of special education services through the supervisory union does provide better services to children and more cost-effective, equitable utilization of resources.
2. It will fund and establish a study to examine and evaluate the feasibility of implementing a census block model (or a variation thereof) for funding special education in Vermont. The study will consider the advantages, disadvantages and policy considerations associated with that funding method and seek approaches, through the funding model, to provide incentives for desirable practices and innovation. Education officials have long sought consideration for alternatives to Vermont's current reimbursement system for public education, and this study is a useful way to advance that work.
3. It will fund and establish access to consulting services for student-centered, cost-effective delivery of special education services for up to ten supervisory unions/districts. These systems will work with the consultants to improve special education services more cost-effectively. The results of the work will benefit children and taxpayers in the participating systems and be utilized to inform the overall delivery of more student-centered, cost-effective special education throughout the state. This approach to effecting the practices, norms and investments for special education in Vermont is both practical and a good value.

In summary, the Vermont Superintendents Association supports H. 859.

I have several specific comments related to the language in the bill.

- Referring to lines 17 – 19 of page 15 of the bill, I have been told that the Vermont Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing is now defunct.
- (Section 2 - Study of Census Block Model) Referring to 4th line from the top of page 27 of the bill, I suggest that the reference to special educators should be to special education administrators since it is the administrator who is more knowledgeable on the funding and delivery of special education services.
- (Section 3 – Consulting Services for Special Education Delivery) Page 29 – 4th line from the bottom, I suggest that you replace the word “value” with the word “cost.” Value is an ambiguous term – cost, in this context, is not.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on H.859.