

To: House Committee on Education, Vermont Legislature  
From: Donna Sebastian, Wardsboro, Vermont  
April 4, 2017

**PLEASE READ MY TESTIMONY:**

- Wardsboro has demonstrated due diligence in its work to follow the law regarding Act 46 and we need more time to complete the process.
- More time is needed for Wardsboro's school board and community to collaborate and work with other towns on how best we can meet the needs of our children, students, and the goals of Act 46 together.
- We would be best served by a system and process that is not rushed with arbitrary deadlines, but instead is thoughtful, respectful of our own knowledge about our community and school, and is truly transparent.
- The preferred merger model in Act 46 and language in S122 does not work well for our rural community in the mountains of southern Vermont.
- Our history has demonstrated that people working in our schools and our school boards in Windham Central Supervisory Union and in other towns in this area can work together regarding professional development for school staff, sharing itinerant teachers, and sharing special education teachers. The integrity of our towns and schools to develop a governance structure that works for our towns' schools and meets the goals of Act 46 should be respected and encouraged through the laws the legislature enacts.
- Sending hundreds of thousands of dollars to towns who merged in speedy fashion under the preferred model is unfair to towns who have demonstrated due diligence under Act 46 and need more time to complete their work and form their governance structures, including alternative governance structures and mergers that are unable to meet deadlines under Act 46.
- What we need is legislation that allows and empowers each town's school board and citizens to meet the goals of Act 46 through governance structures that we create, employing cooperation and collaboration with other towns and their schools in ways that work best for our students and our unique circumstances.
- Towns working together on their school governance structures should be able to hire capable consultants of their choosing, at a reasonable cost, who will help them form their own unique governance structure to achieve the goals of Act 46.

- Much communication and action among towns near and far around our state is demonstrating a willingness and commitment to work together, share ideas and resources, and individually and collectively help one another. We want our legislators to work with us.
- Towns should be able to leave their current Supervisory Union in order to form governance structures with towns currently inside and/or outside their Supervisory Union without requiring all towns in the Supervisory Union to vote on whether or not to allow a town to leave their current Supervisory Union.
- The amount of money school board members receive is insignificant relative to school budgets. Therefore, we don't necessarily need to eliminate each town's school board when creating a governance structure.
- Evidence does **not** support the preferred model in Act 46, or any variation of that preferred model, as working best for every town in every area of our state. Please, seriously consider what we, your constituents, are saying and the suggestions we're making to you regarding legislation on these issues.

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION TO MY TESTIMONY. THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME AND CONSIDERATION.**