

Todd Nichols <tnichols@canaanschools.org> 9:33 PM (10 hours ago)

to mzunder, sharonell16

Ms. Marjorie Zunder,

Per Lemington, VT school board Chair, Ms. Sharon Ellingwood, I am sending this email as testimony in regard to S 122, *An act relating to increased flexibility for school district mergers*, and how it relates to the current VT Act 46 Law per our situation here in Lemington, VT.

First, a bit of background on myself. I have been a public school teacher at Canaan Memorial School in Canaan, VT since 2001. I serve as the sole K-12 physical educator as well as coordinate and instruct a Fire and Emergency services Technical Education program via Canaan Schools that affords our area to get volunteers in Fire and EMS trained to the professional standards as well as afford students opportunities to seek professional employment as career Fire and Emergency personnel. I have served on the Beecher Falls Volunteer Fire Department since 2004, currently as a Captain and training officer. Needless to say I am an invested community member in the small towns up here in our part of the Northeast Kingdom.

With this being said, I would like to first say that I agree with the goals and focus of VT Act 46. The problem lies with the fact that, as currently written, it does not work to attain its financial goal for Lemington taxpayers; Act 46 states: *By enacting this legislation, the General Assembly intends to move the State toward sustainable models of education governance. The legislation is designed to encourage and support local decisions and actions that: (5) are delivered at a cost that parents, voters, and taxpayers value.* The local property owners of Lemington had to endure an educational tax rate of \$2.4263 this year! I am sure that you would find no local taxpayer in the entire state of VT that could or would *value* such a rate!

Further, Lemington literally has no local control over educational taxes because it has no educational infrastructure to levy savings on. We have students in or town who depend on us to raise tax dollars to support their education, and per VT law that's what we do. I agree that Act 46 has an intent to help Lemington's situation, but as currently written we don't stand to gain any substantial traction in educational tax dollar savings for approximately 5 or more years!

I would like to propose a solution to the Lemington problem that would shore up the goal 5 for Act 46. Please craft language in this legislation that would eliminate the 5% throttle each year, over a five year period. This would be a simple and fair solution to our current financial situation which would afford us as well the rest of the NEK Choice towns to have a viable district that would be able to move forward sharing and containing costs for our educational taxpayers as well as continuing afford our students the choice education they deserve as children of Vermont.

I see language under *Sec. 1. Findings* which may lead to my proposed solution and request: ...

greatly differing levels of debt per equalized pupil between districts involved in merger study committees. This act is designed to make useful changes to the merger time lines and allowable governance structures under Act 46 without weakening or eliminating the Act's fundamental phased merger and incentive structures and requirements.

Please help propose *merger and incentive structures* that make sense per the proposed goal that our *parents, voters and taxpayers* can *value* here in Lemington, just as in the rest of our beautiful state of Vermont.

Sincerely,

Todd D. Nichols
Lemington, VT Resident and local taxpayer