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MEMORANDUM

To: Representative Catherine Toll, Chair, House Committee on Appropriations

From: Representative David Sharpe, Chair, House Committee on Education

Date: January 10, 2018

Subject: Provisions in the Governor's Recommended FY2018 Budget Adjustment

We are responding to your letter of January 4, 2018 concerning the Governor's recommended FY 2018 budget adjustment. We support, and view as noncontroversial, the appropriation from the Education Fund to Flexible Pathways to cover program costs, the reversions to the Education Fund for educational programs, and the "Supplemental Property Tax Relief Fund" transfer to fund the Statewide School District Data Management System, as set forth in your letter.

We also support the General Fund transfer of \$300,000.00 to the Agency of Education for the weighting study mandated in 2017 Acts and Resolves No. 49. This study will help us assess whether the tax incentives in our weighting system are effective in producing the desired outcomes for students, whether the weights should be modified or new weighting factors added, and whether alternative methods to weightings should be used. It will also help us assess the fairness of the weighting system across school districts.

We would ask that the Agency of Education be directed to engage the University of Vermont to perform the weighting study. UVM has critical experience and expertise in Vermont's education funding system. For example, this month UVM issued a high quality report on special education funding to the House and Senate Committees on Education. While we appreciate that sole source contracts are contrary to the competitive bidding process supported by the State, they are permitted when legislatively mandated (see page 28 of State of Vermont Agency of Administration Bulletin No. 3.5). Given the importance of the weighting study, the proven qualifications of UVM, and the delay involved in a competitive bidding process, we respectfully request that the budget adjustment act specifically name UVM to conduct this study.