

**Testimony of Steve Howard for the Vermont State Employees Association  
(VSEA)  
March 28, 2018  
House Education Committee  
Re: Vermont Educational Health Benefits Report**

- VSEA would oppose any effort to eliminate our right to collectively bargain health care, which we are in the midst of doing as I testify.
- Any attempt to move the teachers into our plan should—because it is a subject of collective bargaining—be the product of a discussion between the state employees and the teachers directly.
- Any attempt by the Scott Administration to introduce unilateral changes to the State employees' health care plan would almost certainly result in an Unfair Labor Practice charge at the Vermont Labor Relations Board, because both parties have agreed not to attempt to legislatively resolve issues discussed at the bargaining table.

Such a move could have several unintended consequences/complications:

- Loss of our exemption from ERISA by adding non-State employees to the State employees' plan;
- Doing so might also have pension implications for the state employees' pension plan under ERISA;
- All concerned bargaining units would have to approve this change in plan.
- The teachers would have to adopt the state employees' health care plan benefits in lieu of their current benefits.
- The Ed Fund would likely have to contribute additional funds to teacher health care because— as the result of significant concessions at the bargaining table over the years— the teachers' plan is not as robust as the state employees' plan.
- The Education Fund would be responsible for funding any deficit or claims spike that occurred. The Ed Fund would also be responsible for paying the salaries of the state Benefits Division and some of the DHR staff, which are currently paid out of the health plan.