

VASBO Testimony – Wednesday 1/24/2018

Study of Vermont State Funding for Special Education, by UVM AND Expanding and Strengthening Best-Practices Supports for Students who Struggle” by District Management Group

We thank you for the opportunity to share our thoughts on these reports. We believe the cost of special education is a difficult cost management and containment challenge that is compounded by the state’s reimbursement funding system. This funding system encourages a silo approach to service and relies on an administrative heavy, paperwork intensive, process and bureaucracy at the AOE and district levels, resulting in a costly investment that does not benefit students.

We agree with all parties that the current system needs to be changed. We support many of the recommendations in UVM report, most importantly the recommendation that the current state support for special education should NOT be reduced but should be re-invested “to introduce flexibility in how state funding can be used – both to support new and innovative service delivery models as well as to improve the costs-effectiveness with which services are provided.”(UVM Report page 73).

We support

- ❖ Census based funding mechanism;
 - Include flexibility in how state funding can be used.
- ❖ Funding protections for extraordinary student;
- ❖ Appropriate Funding for additional technical support at the Agency of Education to provide guidance, support and advocacy for researched based best practices in services and cost-effectiveness
- ❖ Additional study and/or funding to understand why Vermont has a high percentage of special education students with emotional disturbances and to what extent the increased demand and limited capacity for community based mental health and social services has shifted responsibility to schools. We believe the increase in students in trauma and children born addicted to opiates indicates the need for public policy changes beyond school funding.
- ❖ Five-year phase in period to transition to a census-based model

Respectfully,

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