

Dear Legislators,

Thank you for your consideration of modifications to Act 46. With the many votes against mergers following the “preferred model” of consolidation, it is clear that we need to pursue alternatives so that we can achieve the goals of the act, but in a way that works for our children and our community.

The citizens in our area voted down the proposed merger by a more than 2 to 1 plurality. I believe our voters felt this merger would negatively impact our children’s education (losing programs that neighboring schools didn’t have and reducing responsiveness at the school level to address the individual needs of kids and families) and that the long tradition of participatory democracy that is a foundation of our community would be undermined by the distancing of school decision making to a more centralized board and administration.

S122 does little to meet the concerns of our citizens and merely provides for mergers in a slightly modified form. We feel there are thoughtful, forward looking ideas for alternative governance structures for our region that can meet the goals of Act 46 in a way that is superior to the “preferred model.” The original wording of Act 46 was clear in recognizing the need for flexibility in meeting the differing circumstances throughout Vermont. The option of alternative governance structures is a crucial component of achieving the results outlined in Act 46. We need to remember what we care about is the ends—greater equity, economic efficiency, and transparency—not the means.

H/S15 seemed a much better approach for focusing on these ends—our districts need support and time to explore alternative governance structures. Up until now, there has been too little clarity on alternatives and very little support. I know our district, and others throughout the state, want to pursue the ideals of Act 46. But we don’t believe the preferred merger model or slightly modified forms of merger are the best way in every part of the state to meet these goals.

I hope the legislature can reaffirm their support for flexible options to meet the goals of Act 46, as outlined in the original legislation. H/S15 was supportive of districts exploring options; S122 offers still too limited options that won’t address the concerns of our community.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,  
Rick Gordon, PhD.  
Board Member, Westminster School Board

