

Testimony to House Education Committee
re: S.122 (“increased flexibility for school district mergers”)
4 April 2017

- Our Act 46 committee studied school district consolidation for 18 months before ending in deadlock, split right down the middle.
- The problem? We were able to come up with more advanced and progressive governance ideas than today’s state law will allow.
- S.122 doesn’t help. In fact it perpetuates the problem. How can the legislature possibly think of everything? It will always fall short if it tries.
- Enable local development of superior governance, even if it produces structures you haven’t seen before. Don’t limit us to a fixed set of inferior options.
- For example: many of us in the five towns of Washington Central, which surround Montpelier, would like to work out a framework for closer long-term cooperation with Montpelier. But as long as we’re confined to the law’s pre-fab structures, this cannot and will not happen.
- S.122 cannot fill the void left by inaction on S./H.15.
- If you insist on proceeding with S.122, it will need at least two new provisions to be of any use:
 1. Green light for any non-“preferred” structure that meets the goals of Act 46. If a structure performs well, who cares what it looks like?
 2. Operative language that allows alternative traffic to move forward *now*. Existing statutes are utterly inadequate. Suggestion: give the State Board waiver authority to approve non-conforming proposals.
- Margaret Maclean has offered partnership, whereby you enable us and we deliver you the social goods. Please don’t scorn her proposal!
- You see here one small part of a movement that’s on the upswing. Belief in education underpins it. Deep concern for both present and future generations drives it. The wisdom of the crowd gives it breadth and creative spark.
- Don’t underestimate it. Work with us.

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