

1 S.122

2 Representatives Sibilis of Dover, Buckholz of Hartford, Chesnut-
3 Tangerman of Middletown Springs, Copeland-Hanzas of Bradford, Gannon of
4 Wilmington, Graham of Williamstown, Harrison of Chittenden, Nolan of
5 Morristown, and Yacovone of Morristown move that the House propose to the
6 Senate that the bill be amended by adding a new section, to be Sec. 17, with
7 reader assistance, to read:

8 * * * Extraordinary Small School Grants * * *

9 Sec. 17. EXTRAORDINARY SMALL SCHOOL GRANTS

10 (a) Findings.

11 (1) Vermont’s kindergarten through grade 12 student population has
12 declined from 103,000 in fiscal year 1997 to 76,300 in fiscal year 2017.

13 (2) Vermont recognizes the important role that a small school plays in
14 the social and educational fabric of its community. However, rural school
15 districts have found it particularly challenging to maintain their small schools
16 and provide high quality education to their students because of the decline in
17 Vermont’s student population.

18 (3) The General Assembly has encouraged, through incentive programs
19 established in 2010, 2012, and 2015, school districts to unify existing
20 governance units into more “sustainable governance structures” designed to
21 meet the General Assembly’s identified educational and fiscal goals.

1 (4) Certain rural districts were early in recognizing their challenges and
2 on their own initiative, and without receiving incentives from the State, joined
3 with other districts to form joint contract schools or to become members of
4 union school districts. As a consequence, these districts received less in small
5 school grant support than they would have received had they not taken these
6 actions.

7 (b) Definition. As used in this section, a “qualifying merger” means a new
8 governance structure formed by the merger of a school district identified in
9 subsection (c) of this section and another school district that becomes
10 operational on or before December 1, 2017 under 2010 Acts and Resolves No.
11 153, 2012 Acts and Resolves No. 156, or 2015 Acts and Resolves No. 46, each
12 as amended.

13 (c) Merger support grants. Notwithstanding any provision of law to the
14 contrary, if a school district identified in this subsection (qualifying district)
15 merges with another school district in a qualifying merger, the Secretary shall
16 award an annual merger support grant to the newly merged district in an
17 amount equal to the small school support grant the qualifying district received
18 in the fiscal year immediately prior to the year in which the qualifying district
19 formed a joint contract school or became a member of a union school district.
20 The amount of annual merger support grants for the qualifying districts, if a
21 qualifying district merges in a qualifying merger, shall be:

1 (1) Bridgewater: \$62,161.00

2 (2) Brookline: \$53,672.00

3 (3) Elmore: \$40,000.00

4 (4) Fairlee: \$69,885.00

5 (5) Newfane: \$72,466.00

6 (6) Pomfret: \$85,525.00

7 (7) Rupert: \$6,834.00

8 (8) Vershire: \$57,264.00

9 (9) West Fairlee: \$56,355.00

10 (10) Whitingham: \$54,900.00

11 (d) Combined grants. If more than one qualifying district is part of a
12 qualifying merger, then the merger support grant shall be in an amount equal to
13 the total combined small school support grants each qualifying district received
14 in the fiscal year immediately prior to the year in which the qualifying district
15 formed a joint contract school or became a member of a union school district.

16 (e) Continuation of grants. Payment of the merger support grants under
17 this section shall continue annually unless explicitly repealed by the General
18 Assembly; provided, however, that the Secretary shall discontinue payment of
19 a grant in the fiscal year following closure by a merged district of a school
20 located in what had been a “qualifying district” prior to merger; and further
21 provided that if a school building located in a formerly “qualifying district” is

1 closed in order to consolidate with another school into a renovated or new
2 school building, then the Secretary shall continue to pay the grant during the
3 repayment term of any bonded indebtedness incurred in connection with the
4 consolidation-related renovation or construction.

5 (f) Funding. Notwithstanding any provision to the contrary of 16 V.S.A.
6 § 4025(d), the merger support grants awarded under this section shall be
7 funded by appropriations from the Education Fund, which shall be paid to the
8 Secretary of Education for administration under this section.

9 and by renumbering the remaining section to be numerically correct