

Vermont Council of Special Education Administrators (VCSEA)
Traci Sawyers, Executive Director

** * * Prekindergarten Education * * **

Sec. 10.

On or before December 1, 2018, the Agency of Education and Agency of Human Services shall provide a report to the General Assembly on the costs, benefits, and feasibility of replacing prekindergarten education with a system that provides kindergarten education for children who are four or five years of age, and child care services for children who are age zero through age three.

VCSEA supports the strike all in Sec. 10 of S.257. As I have testified previously, the current language in the bill as proposed by the Senate:

- Is silent on special education delivery;
- Diminishes existing program partnerships, moves away from collaboration (doesn't allow for high quality partnerships) and takes away reference to boundaries;
- Uses public dollars to support private education with no oversight ability to ensure non-discriminatory practices (e.g., 504, special education) - at least currently now contracts with private providers offers some recourse;
- Negatively impacts ADM.

This makes Act 166 largely a statewide voucher system only, when there is the opportunity to do more in getting kids the prevention and early intervention services they need to succeed in school.

VCSEA members want to make sure that we are clear that in thinking about what is proposed, that we are talking about age appropriate service delivery for four year olds which can and does happen in public settings. Study would need to include the current transition from Early Intervention (services through CDD's Children's Integrated Services Program, known as CIS-EI) at age three to Early Childhood Special Education or EEE. There are also concerns about the loss of four year olds from private programs and the impact on high quality pre-K for three year olds. Also, despite enrolment decline, to accommodate many more four year olds, members do believe there is a space/capacity issue in the more populated parts of the state. Finally, we do believe still in trying to improve public/partnerships that currently exist and to further explore how to offer special education within a public/private construct. The Senate

language does not do that and more effort and study is needed for better outcomes for all children.

Therefore, VCSEA recommends a pause this year in changes to Act 166, more study of this concept given our concerns, and **the addition of a comprehensive study of the special education delivery system within the context of the pre-K delivery system in the state of Vermont.** Given the lack of ability to ensure an appropriate level of access to special education in the context of the Act 166 pre-K system, it is important that this is no longer left without attention. The study should provide recommendations for a special education service delivery system for the State of Vermont in the context the recommended system.

Instead of:

“the costs, benefits, and feasibility of replacing prekindergarten education with a system that provides kindergarten education for children who are four or five years of age, and child care services for children who are age zero through age three.”

Two suggested language recommendations:

“the costs, benefits and feasibility of a system that provides age appropriate service delivery in public schools for children who are four or five years of age and child care services for children who are age zero through age three. This should also include a comprehensive study of the special education delivery system within the context of the pre-K delivery system in the state of Vermont.”

“how to improve the public private system of partnerships that currently exist under Act 166. This should include a comprehensive study of the special education delivery system within the context of the pre-K delivery system in the state of Vermont.”

