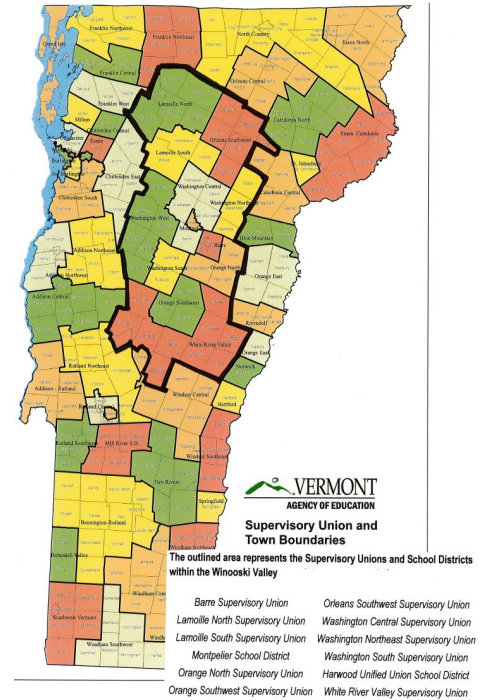


**Testimony to the House Committee on Human Services**  
**Sandra Cameron, M.Ed., MOTR/C**  
**Winooski Valley Superintendents Association, Act 166 Coordinator**  
**May 2, 2018**  
**RE: S.257 Draft No. 18.1**

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today with regard to Universal Prekindergarten. As an Early Education Director and Regional Act 166 Coordinator, I have deep understanding of the benefits and challenges of Act 166. Below is a summary of responses to S.257, draft 18.1.

Support the following provisions:

- Continued mixed delivery system to support all children
- Single agency oversight through the AOE
- Standard agreement in “form prescribed by the Sec. of Education”
- Five-year-olds access PreK tuition when there is an IEP or 504
- Shift from duplicative CDD childcare regulations to State Board of Education, especially with a licensed teacher in every classroom
- Geographic boundaries could align provision of regular education services with provision of special education services = equity for all Vermont’s students
- Connections between schools and families and between schools and private providers
- Weighted membership: .46 supports 10 hours and .7 supports extended day programming, which some families are seeking and that many children need
  - The goal set forward by Governor Shumlin (see Appendix A) was to serve 70% of four-year-olds living in poverty with full-day high-quality PreK by the end of the PreK Expansion grant term. He could not have foreseen the tremendous pressure from current Administration to reduce local budgets concurrent with the loss of the PreK Expansion Grant funds, which will result in difficult decisions for School Districts: trim the program or increase local budget
  - There are areas in Vermont where families cannot access full-day programs without access to full-day public programs. Orange SW SU has no options for families so they are addressing critical need in the public schools. In Maple Run SU (St. Albans), 90% of families whose children are enrolled in the public PreK all-day program reported that they would not be able to access PreK through private providers due to lack of transportation, lack of private providers and/or no need or funds to pay for full day child care
  - Licensed teacher providing direct instruction during the hours of publicly funded PreK is very different (and much more costly) than one teacher onsite for 10 hours in a private center and significantly more than consulting with a licensed teacher for 3 hours in home programs
  - Joint AOE-AHS report released in April (see Appendix B) articulates additional expenses above and beyond instruction: Special services, transportation, nursing, guidance, English Language Learner, homelessness; these are responsibilities of the public school regardless of where the child attends PreK
  - Vermont guidance on serving PreK children with ASD is no less than 25 hours/week



- Survey of 20 Early Ed Leaders: Public schools are not charging resident families for any portion of their public education (even beyond 10/week)

Concerns:

- Completely silent on Special Education
- Disparity in educational quality/criteria among settings does not align with the goals of Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA): **ensuring equitable outcomes**
  - Vermont's decision logic: equitable outcomes and learning opportunities for all Vermont's students

Recommendations:

Approve S.257, draft 18.1 as is and revise language under the PreK Advisory Committee (Sec. 13):(c) Powers and duties. The Committee shall aim to enhance quality and effectiveness by using *data-informed decisions* aligned with *evidenced-based practices* to address the following issues:

- (1) Quality effectiveness
- (2) Resolution of concerns
- (3) Instructional dosage (is 10 hours enough?)
- (4) Application of kindergarten to four-year-olds
- (5) Simplification of regulatory oversight & administration
- (6) Educational equity for children, families and providers
- (7) Reasonable and Equitable access to Prekindergarten through PreK regions

Final word of caution: *The "Preliminary Evaluation of Pre-Kindergarten Education Programs to Promote Optimum Outcomes for Children and to Collect Data that Will Inform Future Decisions,"* released in April, 2018, contains faulty information.

- The map of statewide PreK programs is not accurate
- The use of TSGold data to assess child outcomes is risky because:
  - users have not been required to complete inter-rater reliability
  - data between the "early adopter" year (15-16) and the first year of implementation (16-17) are from the same population, but are not matched (eg: the early adopters group may or may not be representative of the larger sample but are being compared to the larger sample)
  - This statement is absolutely false: "During 2016-17, 100% of all prequalified PreK programs fully met Act 166 quality standards."
    - The AOE-AHS has been made aware of several programs that did not meet the standard for having a licensed teacher on staff for the minimum 10 hrs/week
- Table 7 (Appendix B) clearly outlines additional expenses to public school systems, yet the true cost per child is skewed because this includes children who attended programs with wide variation in hours as well as costs of special education instruction.

## Appendix A:

PETER SHUMLIN, Governor State of Vermont

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE December 11, 2014 Vermont Awarded \$33 Million Federal Preschool Expansion Grant BURLINGTON, Vt. – Vermont has been awarded \$7.3 million of what is expected to be a \$33 million, four-year federal grant to bolster early childhood education offerings for low-income Vermonters. Vermont is one of 18 states nationally to receive the Preschool Expansion Grant. Governor Shumlin said, “This is great news for Vermont, our children, and our economic future. Vermont is one of the top states in America when it comes to early childhood education, and we’re committed to being the best. We know that investments in our youngest children pay huge dividends in their ability to achieve in school and succeed in life. We will use this money to directly expand access to quality early education for Vermont children most in need. I congratulate those at Agencies of Education and Human Services, my own staff, and our many grant partners statewide for their hard work in securing these funds for our children.” In accordance with the grant proposal put forth by the Shumlin Administration, through the Agency of Education and the Agency of Human Services and in partnership with Building Bright Futures and Vermont’s early childhood philanthropic community, **the funding will be used to provide high-quality, full-day PreK for Vermont children in families at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty level. For a family of four, that is about \$48,000 per year. By the end of this grant, Vermont will be serving 70% of all four-year olds at or below 200% of poverty statewide, or about 1,818 children, in full-day, high-quality PreK.** As Vermont moves towards universal PreK under Act 166, these additional, targeted federal resources will allow PreK programs to grow more rapidly to meet the increased demand and **will supplement state PreK spending to improve quality and expand programs from part day to full day.**

## Appendix B

**Table 7: 2016-17 Statewide expenditures for PreK by category of expenditure from all state and federal funding sources.**

	<b>2016-17 Expenditure</b>	<b>Per Student Cost (8,950 Enrollment)</b>	<b>Percent of Total</b>
<b>Total Expenditures</b>	<b>\$64,473,630</b>	<b>\$7,204</b>	
Direct instruction	\$49,152,501	\$5,492	76%
Student support services	\$6,683,494	\$747	10%
Instructional support services	\$1,083,898	\$121	2%
School administration	\$2,325,379	\$260	4%
Central administration and services	\$957,627	\$107	1%
Other	\$4,270,731	\$477	7%

### Notes:

1. Direct instruction - expenditures for instruction and personnel in both general and special education settings, such as classroom teachers, para-educators, etc. This also includes tuition payments to private providers.
2. Student support services - expenditures for activities to assess and improve the well-being of students and supplement teaching. This includes some special education staff, guidance, health, nurses, etc.
3. Instructional support services - expenditures designed to assist instructional staff with content and learning experiences for students. Includes librarians, curriculum coordinators, instruction related technology, etc.
4. School administration - expenditures associated with administering the schools in a district. Includes principals, administrative assistants, department chairs, etc.
5. Central administration and services - expenditures associated with the supervisory union office and functions. Includes superintendents, special education coordinators, business managers, etc.
6. Other - includes transportation, building operation and maintenance, grounds and equipment maintenance, food services, debt, etc.

In looking specifically at direct instruction spending, we note that the tuition in 2016-17 was set at \$3,092, but spending in each region is more than this. This difference in value is attributed to additional special education costs which are provided by school systems above the Act 166 tuition paid to private providers for those students who require those services.

Source: "Preliminary Evaluation of Pre-Kindergarten Education Programs to Promote Optimum Outcomes for Children and to Collect Data that Will Inform Future Decisions," Vermont Agency of Education and Vermont Agency of Human Services, April, 2018.