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TESTIMONY PROVIDED TO: Joint Legislative Justice Oversight Committee

FROM: Jennifer Gresham, Education Division Director, Federal & Education Support Programs

TOPIC: Use of Residential Care Facilities Report

DATE: November 13, 2017

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**Act 85, Sec. E.317**—a report on the use of out of-state and in-state residential placements

**Role of Education:**

- The AOE involvement in this effort includes having a staff member contribute her expertise in this area to the Turn the Curve interagency team collaboration meetings with AHS.
- We are fully supportive of the guiding principles and vision of this team, particularly from an equity standpoint, and are fully supportive of the state's efforts to build community based supports that could mitigate or reduce the necessity for some out-of-state residential placements.
- We know students perform better in school and can thrive when all students are treated as equals, regardless of difficulties they might face in school or at home, and we know students learn better when they are closer to home.
- We also agree that strengthening crisis planning in schools and among providers is important, and aligning resources can make service more efficient and effective.

**Use of Funds:**

- When a child/youth is placed by one of the AHS departments, the Agency of Education is responsible for the education costs.
- Percent of education cost can vary depending on the location of the residential program.

**Other Considerations:**

- This report does not include information about children and youth placed in residential facilities through LEA's as they have their own residential educational placement process separate from AHS.
- The AOE cannot comment on data included in AHS' submitted report. As legislators are aware, the AOE is bound by FERPA and suppresses all educational data when the student group has fewer than 11 individuals.
- There is a changing dynamic in students who need residential placement. We are seeing an increase in younger students who require a different type of community support and closer family connection.
- The AOE is hearing a greater expressed need by school systems for therapeutic supports, both in the schools and in the community to support students and teachers before and after residential placement.

- We are hearing that residential centers in Vermont have difficulty attracting and retaining high quality staff and have little capacity for coverage in the event of staff departure, injury or illness.

### **Moving Forward**

- Agency of Education will continue to work collaboratively with AHS on this issue in the best interest of every student in Vermont.
- Suggest communication with Economic Development to assess interest and barriers-to-entry of out-of-state companies to build and maintain residential centers in state or to assist in-state facilities in expanding opportunities to attend to Vermonter's needs and possibly those of neighboring states.