



Testimony of Jeffrey Francis  
Vermont Superintendents Association  
Senate Education Committee  
H. 897  
April 10, 2018

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

First, the Vermont Superintendents Association (VSA) is in support of the approach outlined in H.897. The Association endorses the “best-practice” approach to supporting all students and the migration to a census block model for funding special education and related services that form the basis for the bill.

You are at the phase in your deliberative process where you are fine-tuning your amendment and are seeking specific reactions to the bill. I know from discussions this morning and from prior testimony today that the bill is being scrutinized by representatives of the AOE, VCSEA, etc. I am deferring to them with respect to the detailed points that they are raising and agree with many of the points they have made.

That stated, I have some specific suggestions that I want to bring to your attention regarding draft 1.1 of the Senate Education Committee’s strike-all amendment.

They are:

- 1) On page 15 - line 15 - there is a reference to the National Income and Product Accounts Implicit Price Deflator for State and Local Government. This is an inflationary index applied in Vermont Statute to certain education funding elements. I believe with an adjustment as significant as a change to the special education funding system, it would be timely and appropriate to ask the Joint Fiscal office to evaluate whether this inflationary measure is the better inflationary measure by which to adjust the census block amount.
- 2) Starting on Page 34 and the reference to the Census-Based Funding Advisory Group, I see that the Senate Education Committee has reduced the number of members of the

Advisory Group to ten from eighteen. The purpose of the Advisory Group, as I originally recommended and subsequently understood it, was to advise on all matters of the implementation of the Act. To accomplish that successfully, a broad array of stakeholders with an expansive body of expertise is in order. Simply stated, the approach taken by the House was to support the implementation of the Act with knowledge and wisdom of personnel working in the field as well as the broad representation and input that comes with representatives of the Associations. I support the approach taken by the House because I think that it will be more effective.

- 3) Also, with respect to the Advisory Group, on line 15 of Page 35, one charge to the Advisory Group is to recommend any statutory changes it determines are necessary or advisable to meet the goals of the Act. I suggest adding language to make clear that the recommendations can cover provisions of H.897 and whatever Act it becomes itself. In other words, it should be made clear that H.897 itself is eligible for recommendations by the Advisory Group.

Thank you.