



MEMORANDUM

TO: Senate Education Committee
FROM: Colin Robinson, Political Director, Vermont-NEA
DATE: April 12, 2017
SUBJECT: H. 513

Thank you for allowing us to share a few thoughts on Act 166 and the draft finger-printing language presented from AOE and DCF. I will keep this brief.

First, I want to re-state that we strongly support strategic and targeted investments in early education. Vermont-NEA members, including teachers, special educators, para-professionals, and counselors in public school pre-kindergarten classrooms, have seen students, especially the youngest, coming to school with complex issues and trauma that impact their ability to learn. Students with these complex adverse childhood experiences often see a reduction in their ability to learn. These types of adverse childhood experiences can also affect the ability of all students to learn, and will often hamper a teacher's ability to teach. Earlier this year you heard directly from some of our members on these issues. There are many needed solutions to the challenges our children and families face, and providing high quality early education is a key part of that solution.

Vermont-NEA supports the language as passed by the House. It is a clear and elegant solution that will avoid some of the complexities as compared to the language presented by the two agencies. This committee heard from representatives of school boards and superintendents about the confusion and concerns that this could cause for all parties involved.

Additionally, the House language would place public school pre-kindergarten programs solely under the regulatory authority of the AOE, which will provide Vermont's public schools with an efficient regulatory system, not an inefficient two-system regulatory framework. Every day, over 80,000 children are entrusted to the care and custody of our public schools and the educators who work in them. We know our schools are safe places for our children to learn and to have access to educational and social services. Every single day, our public school teachers and support professionals ensure the health and safety of Vermont's school-age children. At a time when we are looking for efficiencies from local schools and state agencies, it seems an appropriate time to remove from public schools the burden of oversight from CDD. Public school pre-kindergarten programs provide high quality, developmentally appropriate, play-based education with licensed educators and all the other supports that come from being a part of our public schools. This is where their time and energy should be focused and not on reporting to two agencies of state government.

Thanks for your time.