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## MEMORANDUM

TO: Senate Education Committee

FROM: Colin Robinson, Political Director, Vermont-NEA

DATE: April 20, 2018

SUBJECT: Testimony on H.675 re: Restorative Justice

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First, I want to thank you for continuing the important conversation of school safety and how we ensure the security and wellbeing of Vermont students and educators. I will keep this brief.

I am here to speak to the proposal to have schools move towards the use of restorative justice practices for dealing with school discipline issues. Vermont-NEA supports the use of restorative justice as a method for addressing issues of conflict and discipline for students. We believe the three design outcomes specified in the draft language are important and that proper implementation is key to success.

To that end, we do want to highlight two concerns.

1. **Timing** - As we all know, for any new program or process to be effective and implemented with fidelity, it must include those who will have to implement the changes and that may take some time. That time and training are important and will ensure success. We are concerned that a policy could be developed at a local level but then not well implemented or in implemented in a rushed or inconsistent manor. It would be wise to give schools room to phase in a restorative justice program over two or three years.
2. **Training** – For this to be implemented well school staff – teachers, support staff, and administrators – need to be properly trained and supported. We are concerned that without some mechanism and funding to ensuring that staff are properly trained and supported, an important program will either not be implemented at all or implemented without fidelity. Unfortunately, sometimes educators have experienced good programs implemented poorly and therefore not yielding the desired outcomes. Indeed, if training is not done well, restorative justice can have the effect of re-victimizing the victim, something we all can agree we do not want to happen.

Thank you for moving forward this issue and we look forward to continuing the conversation about building out strong restorative justice programs inside our public schools.