

1 H.488

2 Introduced by Representatives Rachelson of Burlington, Cupoli of Rutland

3 City, and Sibilia of Dover

4 Referred to Committee on

5 Date:

6 Subject: Education; school districts; governance

7 Statement of purpose of bill as introduced: This bill proposes to require the
8 Secretary of Education to develop a detailed proposal to move the State to a
9 single, statewide school district similar to the education governance model in
10 Hawaii.

11 An act relating to creating a statewide school district

12 It is hereby enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Vermont:

13 Sec. 1. STATEWIDE SCHOOL DISTRICT; PROPOSAL; REPORT

14 (a) Findings.

15 (1) Vermont has the lowest student-per-school district average in the

16 United States. Vermont has an average of 315 students per school district.

17 Nationally, the average size of a school district is 3,382 students.

18 (2) The next lowest five states in this category have three times as many

19 students per school district as Vermont's average.

1 (3) Currently, Vermont has 56 Supervisory Unions, 52 union school
2 districts, and 327 principals.

3 (4) The role of the voters and taxpayers is to approve school budgets and
4 payment of education taxes.

5 (5) In fiscal year 2019, \$136,962,560.00 (28 percent of \$1.29 billion)
6 funds education for 80,000 students. In fiscal year 2018, the income yield was
7 \$11,990.00 per equalized pupil.

8 (6) Since 1999, Vermont's expenditure per student has increased while
9 the average daily membership has decreased from 103,893 in 1997 to
10 approximately 78,000 today. Most municipalities are in more than one school
11 district so the education tax rates are weighted based on enrollment.

12 (7) Vermont has a unique education finance system with a statewide
13 funding formula coupled with local administration. The tax formula and
14 process are confusing and not easily understood. Currently, a district's
15 homestead tax rates are determined by its education spending per equalized
16 pupil.

17 (8) Health care bargained on a statewide basis is more efficient than
18 local bargaining, and statewide bargaining on other terms of teachers' contracts
19 would also be more efficient than local bargaining. Vermont lags in average
20 salary of teachers compared to the United States and New England.

1 (b) Proposal to transition to a single statewide school district. In order to
2 maximize the ability to provide equitable educational opportunities to the
3 State's small, declining student population while also minimizing
4 administrative and overhead costs, the Secretary of Education shall develop a
5 proposal by which the State shall transition to a single statewide school district.
6 In developing the proposal, the Secretary shall consider the education
7 governance model in Hawaii, including the positive and negative effects that
8 transition to the model has had on educational opportunities, outcomes, and
9 budgets in Hawaii and on the provision and funding of special education
10 services in that state. The Secretary shall also investigate the need for waivers
11 or other federal actions necessary to transition Vermont to a statewide school
12 district.

13 (c) Report. On or before January 15, 2020, the Secretary shall present a
14 detailed proposal, including a timeline, to the House and Senate Committees
15 on Education to transition the State to a single statewide school district by
16 fiscal year 2023.

17 Sec. 2. EFFECTIVE DATE

18 This act shall take effect on passage.