

Vermont Principals' Association
Testimony H. 209
Jay Nichols, Executive Director

First of all, the Vermont Principals' Association fully supports the main objectives, as we see them, in House 209 in regards to support for assessment of our school facilities across the state and corresponding financial resource assistance for school districts to address necessary capital construction projects.

(1) require the Agency of Education to oversee and hire a consultant to conduct periodic capital needs assessments of State school buildings,

- We believe this position will be critical in effectively ascertaining the condition of school buildings in the State of Vermont.
- We hope this consultant will be able to assist with the prioritizing of funds based on a well-defined needs assessment with student and staff safety as critical factors in determining which buildings/projects are funded as priorities. With limited resources, it will be essential to make decisions in a manner that makes sure the neediest necessary infrastructures have the first opportunity to receive financial support.
- We (VPA) continually advocate to make sure that anything assigned to the Agency of Education comes with corresponding resources so that the Agency can indeed implement legislation as envisioned. We appreciate the sponsors of this bill understanding the importance of this position at the AOE.

and

(2) end the period of suspension of State aid for school construction projects beginning with consolidation projects.

- The additions to what the Secretary must consider when prioritizing projects that I support fully are
 - the project's ability to support increased connectivity, energy efficiency, and use of renewable resources
 - We must be planful in ways in which we haven't in the past
 - inefficient use of State or local resources;
 - We must discourage inefficient resources at all levels - with less students and millions of dollars of deferred maintenance by a conservative estimate, it is incumbent that we use our resources effectively, efficiently, and thoughtfully. Tough decisions will need to be made and they need to be made from a State Perspective, not driven by local advocacy
 - Prioritizing projects that consolidate resources (and buildings when appropriate) and make systems more efficient makes perfect sense both for taxpayers and students
- With building safety to protect students and staff

- This should be a primary consideration as the bill outlines. Building maintenance issues that need to be addressed to ensure safety of the people in the building have to be the highest priority. Having said that, it will be important that the Agency does not allocate resources into projects and buildings that should not be housing students and staff in the first place.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jay Nichols