

To members of the House Education Committee,

Eight years ago, I first sat down in the House Education Committee working toward having private schools that take public dollars play by the same rules as the public schools. My early efforts went nowhere, as the small private school lobby was quick and deafening in its opposition. It took eight years of work for the legislature to understand the issues and begin to pass legislation that equaled the playing field. Legislators are no longer only listening to that small determined group of people.

H39, reminds me of eight years ago, as it is a legislative effort lead by a small determined group of people. This small group of people, that are demanding a delay, are the ones that “created the crisis” by suing the state over the implementation of the law. Any delay in Act 46 will not serve to allow them time to comply with a law that they oppose, rather it will give them time to gather strength and fight to water down the law till it is meaningless. A delay now will insure that your committee will be talking about this again next year.

Time to respect the law and all those who followed it. The merger process in my community was ugly at best. Our first merger plan was defeated 65% against 35% for. Because I was the face of the merger plan, I had to listen and read about how I was dishonest, and stealing money from the school, and that I didn't like my own school. I was sickened by what happened but knew that a defeated merger vote in no way exempted my town from the law and so I went back to work. We finally ended up getting an 82% for and 18% against vote on a plan to merge. Act 46 said forced mergers might happen and that is how we convinced many in my community to comply with the Act. As a school board member, I was depending on state board and legislature to have my back when I was facing my community. Now to hear that the legislature might not have my back after all is disheartening and no way to run a government.

There is no reason to delay Act 46. If the legislature held up every piece of legislation because of a pending lawsuit, suing to delay would become normalized by opponents. No new information has come to light, no unauthorized changes that state board has made to the law, nothing but a small vocal group of people that are against the act. Let's put Act 46 to rest in the legislature, let it play its course and give the vast amount of communities in Vermont that supported the law closure.

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Past President of the VSBA