

Dear Representative Webb and the members of the House Education Committee,

I write to you from Craftsbury to support the one year moratorium bill (H.42).

I serve on the Craftsbury Town School board, but am only speaking for myself in this letter. I sat in your committee room this morning and listened to the testimony provided by Ms. Tyler, and would like to respond to some of her comments.

First, the communities supporting a one-year delay and/or opposing forced mergers, are not in violation of Act 46, nor are they necessarily “fighting the law”, as Ms. Tyler described them. Act 46 provides an off ramp, in the form of Alternative Governance Structure Proposals in Section 9, for communities that could show that merging would not be in the best interests of students, and that they could improve educational outcomes and achieve efficiencies by working together within their existing governance structures. Many communities, my own included, have spent countless hours diligently complying with the Section 9 requirements to produce thoughtful and detailed proposals, most of which were not given careful consideration by the State Board of Education. To liken these communities to rebellious teenagers is patronizing; to ignore the existence of the Section 9 option in Act 46 is irresponsible.

Ms Tyler also implied that since Act 46 passed four years ago, communities have had plenty of time to create new, consolidated governance structures, and that an additional year is not necessary. She overlooks the fact that many communities spent those four years in study groups, learning about the issues and the law, building relationships, collaborating with towns and schools within their Supervisory Union, and doing all the homework that was required before finally creating a Section 9 Proposal. To expect those communities to then turn around the minute their Section 9 Proposal is denied and create new consolidated governance structures on the timeline mandated by the State Board of Education imposes a terrible burden upon boards and administrators who also need to manage the day to day education of their students. Pushing the mergers through on the State Board’s schedule can only harm students as well as communities; please support H.42 and give people time to breathe, think things through, and do their best work.

Sincerely,
Anne Morse
Craftsbury