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MEMORANDUM

To: House Committee on Appropriations
From: House Committee on Education *Kate Webb*
Date: February 21, 2020
Subject: FY 21 Budget

The House Education Committee offers the following input on the Administration's proposed budget for the Agency of Education, other education-related proposals, and the Committee's proposals for FY 21.

In general, the Administration's budget proposal does not include any new or unexpected uses of the Education Fund, other than use-driven increases in programs such as Early College and Dual Enrollment.

The one question mark is funding for Community High School of Vermont. The House Education Committee opposes any proposal to fund CHSV from the Education Fund. CHSV was moved from the Education Fund as part of a mathematical formula to replace the annual General Fund transfer with a relatively equal stream of revenue from taxes. Moving CHSV back to the Education Fund would represent a significant disruption in the formula.

There are several programs in the Administration's proposal the committee supports and would like to see additional funding for, if such funding can be found in the General Fund. These include:

1. Farm to School. The Administration proposes level funding for Farm to School, which does not include the \$50,000 in additional funding found for the current fiscal year. The House Education Committee supports maintaining Farm to School funding at the same level as FY 20, including the additional \$50,000. Farm to School has proven to be a highly successful nutrition and education program for Vermont students, as well as an excellent support for participating farmers. It is, however, quite limited in participation due to lack of funding.
2. Advance Vermont. AV seeks to continue the effort of having 70 percent of Vermonters obtain secondary degrees or certifications of value by 2025. Seeded by the Vermont Student Assistance Corp. for its initial creation, it now needs state funding to work toward the state's 70 by 2025 goal. AV has a clear plan to

move the needle on this goal. The committee supports AV's request for \$250,000 in General Fund support.

3. Governor's Institute of Vermont. GIV has provided Vermont high school students with a range of excellent enrichment opportunities each summer. Despite increasing costs to operate, GIV has been level funded for years. The House Education Committee supports increasing GIV funding to \$275,000, so that its ten years of level funding do not result in cuts to programs, and to financial assistance to students.
4. State Debate and Forensic program at the Capitol. It has come to the committee's attention that this program has been told it must pay for an additional security person during its one day per year at the Capitol building. The committee supports the state covering this small expense to ensure these students can utilize the building.

The House Education Committee is also currently working on several bills that will have funding requests. These include:

1. Literacy initiative. The committee is creating a bill that proposes to improve literacy education for students who struggle in grades kindergarten to three. The bill proposes to offer grants to supervisory unions that join together to enhance their literacy instruction training to meet the goals of Act 173, Vermont's new special education law. In its current form, the bill proposes to fund a literacy specialist position at the Agency of Education (through the General Fund, but hopefully using Federal money) and \$900,000 in grants (from the Education Fund).
2. School Construction. H. 209 will create a statewide inventory of all school buildings and their current condition and needs in order to create a state system of construction aid and allocation. Expert testimony has repeatedly reinforced the need to understand the extent of school construction need statewide in order to design a system to address those needs. H. 209 will include \$1.3 million from the Education Fund to carry out this inventory.
3. Universal Pre-Kindergarten. The committee is working on a bill that may include financial incentives for school districts to join together to hire pre-kindergarten coordinators to strengthen the connections between public and private programs, create unified professional development, and help with paperwork and regulatory challenges. As of the deadline for this memo, the proposed funded amount is undetermined.

The House Education Committee appreciates your attention to these issues.