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To: Senate Committee on Economic Development, Housing & General Affairs

From: Sue Ceglowski, Executive Director

Re: S.250

Date: February 18, 2020

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. My name is Sue Ceglowski and I am the Executive Director of the Vermont School Boards Association (VSBA). Before I speak about S.250, I would like to start with a brief introduction to the VSBA.

The VSBA is a non-profit member organization with a board of directors elected by school board members from 11 regions in the state. The VSBA supports school boards to be effective trustees for their communities and provides a strong collective voice toward enhancing the cause of public education in Vermont. The VSBA is governed by bylaws, resolutions and policies. In the absence of a resolution on a particular topic, the VSBA board provides guidance to VSBA staff.

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I want to preface my comments by indicating that I don't have any particular knowledge or expertise related to whether medium-scale to major school construction projects currently pay mean prevailing wages. Similarly, I don't know whether the fringe benefits paid are in alignment with the 42.5% marker indicated in the bill. I expect that information on customary wage and benefit rates would be available through contractors and potentially through school districts that have recent experiences with school construction projects (there aren't very many). Perhaps the Committee already has the information.

To the extent that wages and benefits currently meet the thresholds included in the legislation, one might ask why the legislation is necessary.

To the extent that wages and benefits do not meet the referenced thresholds, it would seem that requiring the level of wages and benefits indicated in the bill would increase the future cost of school construction projects, which is a significant consideration given prominent concerns both about the overall

cost of education and the fact that there is currently (since 2007) a moratorium on state aid for school construction.

Given the information outlined above, it may be appropriate for the matters addressed in S.250 to become part of the discussion around the prospects for re-establishing school construction aid. If Committee members are interested in learning more about the issues around re-establishing school construction aid, the House Education Committee and House Corrections and Institutions Committee are holding a joint hearing today at 1:00 to hear the testimony of school board members, facilities directors and superintendents on the topic.

If the Committee intends to act on S.250, I would respectfully request that you hear from local school officials and contractors. Thank you for your consideration.

