

Whereas, hemp farmers and processors encourage Congress to reassess the definition of hemp as referenced in the 2018 Farm Bill and increase the farm production values to one percent tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) in order to allow hemp farmers to increase yield potential per acre and profitability for all hemp grown in the State, and

Whereas, increasing yield potential per acre equates to increased profit potential for Vermont's farm families and hemp processors, *now therefore be it*

Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives:

That the General Assembly urges Congress to revise the current definition of hemp found in the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018, increasing the THC threshold from 0.3 percent to 1.0 percent, *and be it further*

Resolved: That the Secretary of State be directed to send a copy of this resolution to the Vermont Congressional Delegation, the President Pro Tempore and Secretary of the U.S. Senate, and the Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives.

Favorable

S. 242.

An act relating to funding to support a dental therapy laboratory at Vermont Technical College.

Reported favorably by Senator Sirotkin for the Committee on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs.

(Committee vote: 5-0-0)

Second Reading

Favorable with Recommendation of Amendment

S. 46.

An act relating to ethnic and social equity studies standards for public schools.

Reported favorably with recommendation of amendment by Senator Baruth for the Committee on Education.

The Committee recommends that the bill be amended by striking out all after the enacting clause and inserting in lieu thereof the following:

Sec. 1. FINDINGS

(a) 2018 Acts and Resolves No. 173, Sec. 11 directed the Agency of Education to undertake a study examining and evaluating the current formula

used to weigh economically disadvantaged students, English language learners, and secondary-level students in Vermont for purposes of calculating equalized pupils. The study was also to consider whether new cost factors and weights should be included in the equalized pupil calculation.

(b) The findings from the Pupil Weighting Factors Report dated December 23, 2019 (Report), produced by a University of Vermont-led team of researchers including national experts on student weighting, were stark, stating that “[n]either the factors considered by the [current] formula nor the value of the weights reflect contemporary education circumstances and costs.” The Report also found that the current “values for the existing weights have weak ties, if any, with evidence describing the difference in the costs of educating students with disparate needs or operating schools in different contexts.”

(c) As a corrective to this situation, the major recommendations of the Report are straightforward, specifically that the General Assembly increase certain of the existing weights and that it add population density (rurality) as a new weighting factor, given the Report’s finding that rural districts pay more to educate a student. However, given the statewide nature of Vermont’s education funding system, and the reality that any change in the weighting formula is complex due to its relationship to other educational policies and will produce fluctuations in tax rates across the State, the General Assembly has chosen to develop a phased approach to revising the weighting formula.

Sec. 2. PUPIL WEIGHTING FACTORS; IMPLEMENTATION REPORT; PUBLIC OUTREACH

(a) On or before December 15, 2020, the Agency of Education, in collaboration with the State Board of Education and stakeholders from the education community, including the Vermont Superintendents Association, the Vermont School Boards Association, the Vermont Principals Association, and the Vermont-NEA, shall develop a plan of implementation (Implementation Plan) for the Report’s recommended weighting changes, found in Table E.1 of the Report’s Executive Summary, under the heading “New Weight Derived from Models with Controls for SWDs.” This Implementation Plan shall include:

(1) a timeline for phasing in the equalized pupil weighting changes over three years;

(2) a design for the implementation that is sensitive to the effect on property taxes and budgets in all of Vermont’s school districts; and

(3) consideration of the new formula’s interaction with other provisions of existing law, including the excess spending penalty threshold, the hold-

harmless provision, the effect on non-operating districts and the districts to which they pay tuition, small school grants, and incentives created under 2015 Acts and Resolves No. 46.

(b) As part of its collaboration with the Agency of Education under subsection (a) of this section, on or before December 1, 2020, the State Board of Education shall hold not less than six public meetings in different regions of the State, both to help educate the public about the financial realities of the weighting formula and any changes to it and to gather public input on the Report and its proposed implementation. The Board shall refer this testimony to the Agency of Education, which shall use the input to inform its Implementation Plan.

(c) The Agency will deliver its completed Implementation Plan to the House and Senate Committees on Education, and to the House Ways and Means and to the Senate Finance Committees, no later than December 15, 2020.

Sec. 3. REQUIREMENT FOR ADDITIONAL LEGISLATIVE ACTION

During the first year of the 2021-2022 biennium, the House and Senate Committees on Education shall consider the Agency's Implementation Plan, making such changes as they may deem necessary. A positive vote of both the House and Senate, and approval by the Governor, would then be required to put the Implementation Plan into effect.

Sec. 4. EFFECTIVE DATE

This act shall take effect on passage.

And that after passage the title of the bill be amended to read:

An act relating to the implementation of the Pupil Weighting Factors Report.

(Committee vote: 4-2-0)

S. 59.

An act relating to the creation of the Sports Betting Study Committee.

Reported favorably with recommendation of amendment by Senator Sirotkin for the Committee on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs.

The Committee recommends that the bill be amended by striking out all after the enacting clause and inserting in lieu thereof the following: