

1 TO THE HONORABLE SENATE:

2 The Committee on Education to which was referred House Bill No. 39
3 entitled “An act relating to the extension of the deadline of school district
4 mergers required by the State Board of Education” respectfully reports that it
5 has considered the same and recommends that the Senate propose to the House
6 that the bill be amended by striking out all after the enacting clause and
7 inserting in lieu thereof the following:

8 Sec. 1. SCHOOL DISTRICT MERGERS; STATE BOARD OF
9 EDUCATION ORDER

10 (a) Statement of intent.

11 (1) 2017 Acts and Resolves No. 49 made “useful changes to the merger
12 time lines” contained in 2015 Acts and Resolves No. 46 “without weakening or
13 eliminating the Act’s fundamental phased merger and incentive structures and
14 requirements.” Act 49 reemphasized this point by noting that “[n]othing in this
15 act should be interpreted to suggest that it is acceptable for a school district to
16 fail to take reasonable and robust action to seek to meet the goals of Act 46.”

17 (2) Similarly, nothing in this act, which permits a final extension of the
18 deadline for mergers required by the State Board of Education, should be
19 interpreted to weaken or undermine in any way the State Board’s final merger
20 order of November 28, 2018 or to encourage delay for school districts that
21 want to merger on July 1, 2019. Except as modified by this act, school

1 districts remain under all obligations under Acts 46 and 49, whether or not they
2 choose to delay the operational date of their merger.

3 (b) Definitions. As used in this section:

4 (1) “Default Articles” means the Default Articles of Agreement issued
5 with the State Board Report.

6 (2) “Existing district” means a union school district created by vote of
7 the electorate on or after July 1, 2014 into which a merging district is ordered
8 by the State Board Order to merge.

9 (3) “Forming district” means a school district that is ordered by the State
10 Board Order to merge with other forming districts to create a newly formed
11 district.

12 (4) “Initial members” mean the initial members of the board of a newly
13 formed district elected under Article 10 of the default articles.

14 (5) “Merging district” means a school district that is ordered by the State
15 Board Order to merge into an existing district.

16 (6) “Newly formed district” means a union school district that is formed
17 by the State Board Order by merging forming districts.

18 (7) “State Board Order” means the section of the State Board Report
19 entitled “State Board of Education’s ‘order merging and realigning districts
20 and supervisory unions where necessary pursuant to Act 46, Sec. 10(b).”

1 (8) “State Board Report” means the “Final Report of the Decisions and
2 Order on Statewide School District Merger Decisions Pursuant to Act 46,
3 Sections 8(b) and 10” issued by the State Board of Education dated
4 November 28, 2018.

5 (c) Notwithstanding any provision of law to the contrary:

6 (1) Merger deadline extension.

7 (A) Except as provided in subdivisions (1)(B) and (C) of this
8 subsection, the operational deadline for school district mergers under the State
9 Board Order shall be on July 1, 2019 or July 1, 2020.

10 (i) For the mergers of forming districts into a newly formed
11 district, the school board of the newly formed district, operating in accordance
12 with the default articles, shall determine, by majority vote of the initial
13 members representing a quorum, the operational date of merger.

14 (ii) For the merger of a merging district into an existing district,
15 the school board of the existing district shall determine, by majority vote of
16 members representing a quorum, the operational date of merger.

17 (B) The operational deadline for school district mergers under the
18 State Board Order shall be on July 1, 2019 if the relevant board does not
19 determine the operational date of the merger under subdivision (1)(A) of this
20 subsection.

1 (C) The deadline for mergers that, in the State Board Order, are
2 conditioned upon approval of voters of the existing district shall be as specified
3 in the State Board Order.

4 (2) Default articles. For a newly formed district that has an operational
5 deadline of July 1, 2020 under subdivision (1)(A) of this subsection, the
6 default articles are amended as follows:

7 (A) by striking out the date “July 1, 2019” wherever it appears and
8 inserting in lieu thereof the date “July 1, 2020”; and

9 (B) by striking out the date “February 28, 2019” in Article 9(D)(ii)(b)
10 and Article 14 and inserting in lieu thereof the date “July 1, 2019”.

11 (3) Small schools grant.

12 (A) If a school district that merges under the State Board Order has
13 an operational merger date of July 1, 2019, and that district is an “eligible
14 school district” as defined in 16 V.S.A. § 4015 that received a small schools
15 support grant under 16 V.S.A. § 4015 in the fiscal year two years prior to the
16 first fiscal year of merger, then the school district into which that district
17 merged shall receive an annual small schools support grant in an amount equal
18 to the small schools support grant received by the merging district in the fiscal
19 year two years prior to the first fiscal year of merger. If more than one school
20 district was an eligible school district and merged into the same school district,
21 then the small schools support grant for the school district into which those

1 districts merged shall be in an amount equal to the total combined small
2 schools support grants they received in the fiscal year two years prior to the
3 first fiscal year of merger.

4 (B) Payment of the grant under subdivision (3)(A) of this subsection
5 shall continue annually unless explicitly repealed by the General Assembly;
6 provided, however, that the Secretary shall discontinue payment of the grant in
7 the fiscal year following closure by the school district of a school that qualified
8 the district for the grant; and further provided that if a school building that
9 housed a school that qualified the district for the grant is closed in order to
10 consolidate with another school into a renovated or new school building, then
11 the Secretary shall continue to pay the grant during the repayment term of any
12 bonded indebtedness incurred in connection with the consolidation-related
13 renovation or construction.

14 (4) Union school district budget.

15 (A) If the first budget of a newly formed district has not been
16 approved by voters on or before June 30 for the next fiscal year, the Agency of
17 Education shall authorize an amount of education spending for that newly
18 formed district equal to:

19 (i) the cumulative education spending amount authorized by the
20 most recently voter approved school budgets of the forming districts;
21 multiplied by

1 (ii) the percentage that represents the average statewide increase
2 from the prior fiscal year to the current fiscal year in school district education
3 spending authorized by voter approved school district budgets, based on data
4 received by the Agency of Education on or before June 14 of the prior fiscal
5 year.

6 (B) The amount authorized by the Agency of Education under
7 subdivision (4)(A) of this subsection shall be the “education spending” of the
8 newly formed district for the relevant fiscal year under 16 V.S.A. chapter 133.

9 (C) The school board of the newly formed district, operating in
10 accordance with the default articles, shall determine how funds shall be
11 expended in the relevant fiscal year under this subdivision (4). In addition, the
12 school board of the newly formed district shall have the authority to expend
13 any other funds received from other sources in the relevant fiscal year under
14 this subdivision (4), including endowments, parental fundraising, federal
15 funds, nongovernmental grants, or other State funds such as special education
16 funds paid under 16 V.S.A. chapter 101.

17 Sec. 2. 16 V.S.A. § 4015 is amended to read:

18 § 4015. SMALL SCHOOL SUPPORT

19 (a) In this section:

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