

1 TO THE HONORABLE SENATE:

2 The Committee on Education to which was referred Senate Bill No. 46  
3 entitled “An act relating to ethnic and social equity studies standards for public  
4 schools” respectfully reports that it has considered the same and recommends  
5 that the bill be amended by striking out all after the enacting clause and  
6 inserting in lieu thereof the following:

7 Sec. 1. FINDINGS

8 (a) 2018 Acts and Resolves No. 173, Sec. 11 directed the Agency of  
9 Education to undertake a study examining and evaluating the current formula  
10 used to weigh economically disadvantaged students, English language learners,  
11 and secondary-level students in Vermont for purposes of calculating equalized  
12 pupils. The study was also to consider whether new cost factors and weights  
13 should be included in the equalized pupil calculation.

14 (b) The findings from the Pupil Weighting Factors Report dated December  
15 23, 2019 (Report), produced by a University of Vermont-led team of  
16 researchers including national experts on student weighting, were stark, stating  
17 that “[n]either the factors considered by the [current] formula nor the value of  
18 the weights reflect contemporary education circumstances and costs.” The  
19 Report also found that the current “values for the existing weights have weak  
20 ties, if any, with evidence describing the difference in the costs of educating  
21 students with disparate needs or operating schools in different contexts.”

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

10       Sec. 2. PUPIL WEIGHTING FACTORS; IMPLEMENTATION REPORT;

11               PUBLIC OUTREACH

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

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

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

5           (3) consideration of the new formula’s interaction with other provisions  
6           of existing law, including the excess spending penalty threshold, the hold-  
7           harmless provision, the effect on non-operating districts and the districts to  
8           which they pay tuition, small school grants, and incentives created under 2015  
9           Acts and Resolves No. 46.

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

18           (c) The Agency will deliver its completed Implementation Plan to the  
19           House and Senate Committees on Education, and to the House Ways and  
20           Means and to the Senate Finance Committees, no later than December 15,  
21           2020.

1       Sec. 3. REQUIREMENT FOR ADDITIONAL LEGISLATIVE ACTION

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

7       Sec. 4. EFFECTIVE DATE

8           This act shall take effect on passage.

9  
10           and that after passage the title of the bill be amended to read: “An act  
11           relating to the implementation of the Pupil Weighting Factors Report”

12  
13           (Committee vote: \_\_\_\_\_)

14           \_\_\_\_\_

15           Representative \_\_\_\_\_

16           FOR THE COMMITTEE