

March 1, 2019

Summary of Testimony to Vermont State Senate Education Committee

By Julie Mach Resident of Pawlet, VT and School Director for Metawee School District

Regarding S63: An act relating to expanding dual enrollment to students who attend schools outside of Vermont

I am a School Director for the Mettawee School District which is a merged district under Act 46 (Rupert School District, Pawlet School District and Union District 47 merged to become the Mettawee School District). The Mettawee School District is part of the Bennington Rutland Supervisory Union.

It is my understanding that last week's testimony from the Agency of Education indicated that the Mettawee School District is merged with Poultney and now has an in state high school. That is not true. There is no Vermont public high school in our district, in fact there is no Vermont public high school in our entire Supervisory Union. I would also like to correct the testimony given by a Stamford parent last week. This parent testified that Granville and Salem, NY schools are still designated, that is no longer true. Prior to Act 46 the towns of Pawlet and Rupert operated the Mettawee Community School preK-6 and designated public schools in Granville and Salem NY, respectively, for grades 7-12. Our towns voted to merge while maintaining designation to these schools but the State Board of Education turned down our merger resulting in our new district becoming a choice district. Our merged district operates the Mettawee Community School for grades preK-6 with choice for grades 7-12. We still send a majority of our 7-12 students to the public schools in Granville and Salem, NY. S.63 as introduced would allow those students access to Vermont's dual enrollment program.

The Agency of Education's proposed amendment to S.63 would make our students attending public schools in New York ineligible for dual enrollment. This proposed amendment would result in an extreme inequity between students within our district. The amendment would make students within the Mettawee district that are attending approved independent schools eligible but not those that are attending public high schools in New York. The bulk of our 7-12 students attend Granville and Salem, NY schools for many reasons but it is safe assume one of the main drivers in this decision is cost. Our district provides transportation to only these schools not the other independent schools, and the tuition for these independent schools are above the current VT state average that we pay in tuition, therefore parents must pay the difference. This results in the majority of our economically disadvantaged students attending NY state public high schools. It is my understanding that dual enrollment is specifically beneficial to economically disadvantaged students that might not otherwise consider post-secondary education. It is not equitable to provide the dual enrollment option for children attending independent schools in our district but not provide dual enrollment for the students attending public schools, both of which are funded through district tuition dollars.

I request that you please pass S.63 as originally introduced because the proposed amendment by the Agency of Education would result in extreme inequity to students within the Mettawee School District, this would clearly be out of line with Vermont's educational goal for equity to students of varying socio-economic backgrounds.

If the Committee is concerned that S.63 is overly broad, it could amend section (IV) of the bill as follows:

(IV) a public school in a state that is contiguous to Vermont or a public school in the Province of Quebec to which the student's district of residence pays publicly funded tuition on behalf of the student.

Respectfully submitted,

Julie Mach