

1 S.13

2 Introduced by Senator Baruth

3 Referred to Committee on

4 Date:

5 Subject: Education; equalized pupils; implementation report

6 Statement of purpose of bill as introduced: This bill proposes to require the
7 Agency of Education to develop a plan to implement the equalized pupil
8 weighting changes outlined in the Pupil Weighting Factors Report dated
9 December 24, 2019, produced by a University of Vermont-led team of
10 researchers.

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

12 It is hereby enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Vermont:

13 Sec. 1. FINDINGS

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

1 (b) The findings from the Pupil Weighting Factors Report dated
2 December 24, 2019 (Report), produced by a University of Vermont-led team
3 of researchers, including national experts on student weighting, were stark,
4 stating that “[n]either the factors considered by the [current] formula nor the
5 value of the weights reflect contemporary educational circumstances and
6 costs.” The Report also found that the current “values for the existing weights
7 have weak ties, if any, with evidence describing the difference in the costs of
8 educating students with disparate needs or operating schools in different
9 contexts.”

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

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

3 (a) On or before December 15, 2021, the Agency of Education, in
4 collaboration with the State Board of Education and stakeholders from the
5 education community, including the Vermont Superintendents Association, the
6 Vermont School Boards Association, the Vermont Principals Association, and
7 the Vermont-NEA, shall develop a plan of implementation (Implementation
8 Plan) for the Report’s recommended weighting changes, found in Table E.1 of
9 the Report’s Executive Summary, under the heading “New Weight Derived
10 from Models with Controls for SWDs.” This Implementation Plan shall
11 include:

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

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

16 (3) consideration of the new formula’s interaction with other provisions
17 of existing law, including the excess spending penalty threshold, the effect on
18 nonoperating districts and the districts to which they pay tuition, small school
19 grants, and incentives created under 2015 Acts and Resolves No. 46.

20 (b) As part of its collaboration with the Agency of Education under
21 subsection (a) of this section, on or before December 1, 2021, the State Board

1 of Education shall hold, virtually or in person, not less than six public meetings
2 in different regions of the State, both to help educate the public about the
3 financial realities of the weighting formula and any changes to it and to gather
4 public input on the Report and its proposed implementation. The Board shall
5 refer this testimony to the Agency of Education, which shall use the input to
6 inform its Implementation Plan.

7 (c) The Agency shall deliver its completed Implementation Plan to the
8 House and Senate Committees on Education, the House Committee on Ways
9 and Means, and the Senate Committee on Finance, not later than December 15,
10 2021.

11 Sec. 3. REQUIREMENT FOR ADDITIONAL LEGISLATIVE ACTION

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

17 Sec. 4. EFFECTIVE DATE

18 This act shall take effect on passage.