

Hello Speaker Krowinski, Chair Webb and Members of the House Committee on Education,

I was encouraged to see the House taking up the pupil weighting issue this session. This issue has been in existence for 20+ years. While the reasons for the inequity that has existed within our schools had not been realized until the recent Pupil Weighting Factors Report in 2019, the problem of inequity has been felt by districts like Marlboro for some time. It is clear to us now - a rural community - why we have struggled to provide resources to students where other towns in VT have not.

A majority of schools in VT - those that are small, rural, economically disadvantaged and/or contain English Language Learners - are hurting from this inequity. It would be negligent for the House to not do as the Senate has done and address - or rather go further and FIX - the issue.

Aside from being underfunded via the weights, communities like Marlboro have also seen penalties on top of the spending model inequity. It's important for representatives that are addressing this issue to know the hard examples and challenges schools like Marlboro face. In recent history (about 2-3 years) we have seen:

- an art class housed in a facility storage unit
- a loss or reduction in programming of specials (e.g. art)
- a turning away of pre-school students due to classroom size constraints
- inequitable transportation costs/maintenance due to long dirt roads (many districts do not have to deal with this issue)
- small kitchen areas for serving meals to a growing population (we have to distribute in hallways)
- a loss of lower grade assistance to accommodate mandated professional development training (to train up teachers for Multi-tiered systems of support)
- other rising costs from state mandates (e.g. non-district-negotiated healthcare, etc)

As a State - with the majority of districts feeling this inequity - we can no longer push this issue out or delay it. I'm sure Marlboro is not the only district writing to you, again, to ensure that the pupil weighting issue be resolved this session. We need relief!

How we got here is no longer the issue, rather how we get out of it is completely in your hands and can be done by simply directing the AOE to adjust the weights in the formula they use. Whether you do this in a phased out way or not is up to you, but I beg you to not fall into the narrative of winners and losers. There are only losers in this issue and that is the generation or more of students that have been deprived their just resources. Should the legislature not enact change this year, it will be knowingly harming students. That is not something any district can sit idly by watch happen. I believe there are representatives that are fighting for their districts to not see an increase to their tax rate. That is their right, however, there are many districts that will see an increase that SUPPORT this pupil weighting change. Their reason? It's the right thing to do. It's the moral thing to do.

There are also representatives who will say that this issue is too complex, and hope to push the issue to another session - that time has passed. While it may be complex for an innocent bystander, it is not complex for a school board member or informed member of the public. The Pupil Weighting Factors Report lays it all out for you, and H.54 creates a pathway to that fix.

I appreciate the work you do, and I realize there are many items you take up that are difficult on your agenda. This fix, however, is not that. All the arguments appear to be only in favor of overfunded districts keeping the resources that should be rightly distributed to districts that are hurting. Please do the right thing. Move on H.54

Sincerely,

Douglas Korb, Chair

Marlboro School District

Member - The Coalition for Vermont Student Equity