



# WINOOSKI SCHOOLS

*We are the future.*

To: House Committee on Education  
From: Nicole Mace, Finance Manager  
Re: Support for H. 91  
Date: March 11, 2020

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of H.91. I am a first year Finance Manager with two staff - a payroll/fiscal services specialist and an HR manager. We are scheduled to be in the final cohort of districts moving into the eFinance system starting this July. We currently use Infinite Visions software for all accounting, payroll, HR, and employee access center services. Two years ago, we began using Time Clocks Plus for hourly employees, a systems integration process that was not without challenges. However, the two systems currently work well together.

This past year has been tremendously stressful for the employees in our office who are responsible for processing payroll and benefits. Throughout all of the challenges COVID presented - working remotely, implementing new payroll rules, employee leave benefits, and grant programs - the saving grace has been that our accounting, payroll, and benefits systems did what they were supposed to do. While we can never predict what the next curveball will be, we can always figure out what to do because our systems are both familiar to our employees, and are high functioning.

Over the past two weeks, I have spoken with folks from the AOE, business managers, HR/benefits managers, and payroll clerks in districts that have implemented eFinance. Some are one year in, and others were in the first group to go live. While some individuals thought eFinance met their needs, they were largely from districts who had transitioned from antiquated finance systems that were in need of an upgrade.

Every person I spoke with who used the system we currently use indicated that eFinance does not have the same capabilities. Examples include payroll-related tasks taking twice as long to perform, with some needing to be performed manually; HR reports not exporting to Excel or having to be manually created every time they need to be run; and cash reconciliation processes having to be done manually.

Every person I spoke to indicated that significant time and effort was required in order for the transition to go smoothly. All had more staff available to them than we have in our office. My current assessment is that in order to support even a minimally successful transition, we will need to hire additional staff.

When I asked the AOE what benefits they see with requiring us to move to eFinance, they indicated that they can more easily pull data out of the system, which could reduce the time and effort at the district level in producing reports for the state. However, one benefit of producing a report ourselves is that we can identify any issues or mistakes we might have made before the information goes to the state. In my first year, the process of producing reports has served as an important internal control and check on our processes.

In theory, moving to a common financial management system statewide makes sense. However, it is not just the accounting software that is affected. This transition affects employee payroll and benefits administration. Requiring districts that are currently using high functioning systems that effectively integrate all three components to expend staff time and resources to transition to a system that is less functioning (and in some cases, not effectively integrated) does not make sense.

In my view, much of what the General Assembly had hoped to accomplish through a common financial system can be accomplished through the use of the Uniform Chart of Accounts (UCOA). We can still move forward with full implementation of the UCOA without moving all districts to eFinance.

As a new Finance Manager in a district with a small central office, I respectfully request this Committee to indefinitely delay implementation of the statewide financial system until we can be assured that eFinance has fully resolved all issues that have been identified. Alternatively, we would support an approach that would allow districts to opt-in to the statewide system. Thank you for your consideration.