

Good Morning Committee Members,

I have listened intently over the last few days to the discussions on S.13 in the House Ways and Means and House Education committees. I appreciate all the time the committees are taking to fully consider the weighting study implications to schools throughout Vermont. One thing I keep hearing that gives me pause is this concept that underweighted schools cannot be trusted to do the right thing for their kids, and that there must be some oversight on how the increased taxing capacity is absorbed by the districts.

I want to emphasize that I am not an expert on education finance, but my education and professional career are centered around applied mathematics and data analytics. I have spent a lot of time with the simulator and the JFO report from last year. What strikes me when I review these reports is how each district is unique.

There are underweighted districts with tax rates between 1.27 and 2.05 (Similarly, there are over weighted districts with tax rates ranging from 1.34 to 2.01). There are underweighted districts who spend less than \$15000/year per pupil, and there are districts who spend \$20,000+ and have paid millions in excess spending penalties. An underweighted school is not automatically providing a less than equitable education relative to other schools in Vermont. Similarly, just because a school is over weighted it doesn't mean they have invested their excess tax capacity in a way that promotes equitable educational opportunities. What the weighting study has proven is that the baseline is not the same for everyone and adjusting the weights will work toward leveling the playing field.

There are underweighted districts that have spent the last 20 years suppressing their tax rate at the expense of student opportunity. There are underweighted districts that have maintained opportunity despite spending penalties and tax rates hovering near 2.0 for over a decade. And there are districts running the gamut in between. To say that an underweighted district MUST use their tax capacity a specific way is short sighted. Will we be retroactively checking all the over weighted districts to make sure they have used 20 years of "extra" tax capacity correctly?

I respectfully ask that as you consider S.13 you keep in mind that by and large, school boards across this state do their very best to provide a quality education to their kids, regardless of whether they are overweighed or underweighted. To say now that underweighted districts must be micromanaged insults the boards, and insults the work they have done for the last 20 years. They should be held to the same standards as any other school in the state and additional oversight is not needed.

Regards,  
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