



Kingdom East School District

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Dr. Jennifer Botzjoorns, Superintendent
Kingdom East School District

February 2, 2022

Thank you for inviting me to testify. My 36th year in education, I serve as superintendent for the rural remote Kingdom East school district in the Northeast Kingdom. My prior work was in Chittenden County, Montpelier and a small independent school in Burlington.

I fully support the educational goals and purposes of Act 173 to enhance the effectiveness, availability, and equity of services provided to students who require additional support. I agree with the goals and intended outcomes and support the shift in focus to support all instruction.

My unequivocal concern with this legislation and the enactment of it at this time surrounds Section 11.

CENSUS GRANT SUPPLEMENTAL ADJUSTMENT; PUPIL WEIGHTING FACTORS; REPORT

(B) The relationship between each of the current weighting factors and the quality and equity of educational outcomes for students. Whether .. Weighting factors, including students from economically deprived backgrounds .. should be modified, and if so, how the weighting factors should be modified and whether the modification would further the quality and equity of educational outcomes for students. (D) Whether to add any weighting factors, including a school district population density factor and a factor for students who attend regional career technical education centers, and if so, why the weighting factor should be added and whether the weighting factor would further the quality and equity of educational outcomes for students.

Why do we need weighting factors? Because there are undeniable inequities within our state. I am from a rural, remote high poverty district serving Caledonia and Essex County. Without the weighting and funding married to the special education delivery and services there will be a continued and growing inequality.

I will provide 2 specific examples of why, without the weighting attached to Act 173, our District will not serve all our children in a fair and equitable manner.

Example #1 Classrooms:

Last week I visited a middle school classroom in one of our schools. In one classroom with 23 students, eleven have disabilities and need instructional adaptations. In another class of 22, eight have disabilities and need instructional adaptations. 48% and 36% respectively. In a single room, one student has oppositional defiant disorder, another can not form letters, a third has an emotional

disability, two have cognitive delays, 3 have autism. We are working with a push in and pull out model, quality first instruction, we need the resources to provide all these children with the support they need.

Second example: As I speak, our professional staff have 44 emergency or provisional licenses. I would like to read the provisional or emergency license endorsement areas as it provides a powerful piece of information.

15-Social Studies
19A-Middle Grades-English Language Arts
19B-Middle Grades-Mathematics
00-Elementary Education
05-English
61-School Librarian
12-Music
19B-Middle Grades-Mathematics
19C-Middle Grades-Science
19B-Middle Grades-Mathematics
06B-Spanish-Modern and Classical Language
19C-Middle Grades-Science
00-Elementary Education
06A-French-Modern and Classical Language
19A-Middle Grades-English Language Arts
19A-Middle Grades-English Language Arts
19D-Middle Grades-Social Studies
19B-Middle Grades-Mathematics
19B-Middle Grades-Mathematics
64-School Counselor
19A-Middle Grades-English Language Arts
02-Art
19D-Middle Grades-Social Studies
64-School Counselor
82-Special Educator
19D-Middle Grades-Social Studies
31-Health Education

What a provisional or emergency license means is that all these teachers must spend evenings and weekends obtaining the coursework, while at the same time preparing lessons. They need extra classes, are submitting their own assignments, and meeting online for college courses. And they are working with the classroom described above. They are incredible hard working individuals, and they do not have, yet, the professional training necessary to implement Act 173

When I worked as a school leader for 11 years in a more affluent district, I do not remember more than 5 provisional or emergency licenses over the 11 year time period. Maybe that has changed, but I can assure you that other regions do not have the high numbers that we do. This is the reality of a rural remote district. Higher rates of student need and need for professional development.

These are two examples, there are many more. The weighting and special education must go hand in hand. One without the other is in contradiction to the very law that is to be enacted.

With the weighting factors, we would use the extra resources to assure equitable access to education. For example, cultivating teachers Our innovative program takes paraprofessionals who are committed to our region and have not had the chance to attend college and get degrees. The program can train and provide professional growth to obtain licenses and support our students We would also use the resources to creatively provide learning for students, and increase salaries to recruit and retain individuals to our region.

The current system penalizes students depending on where they live. The Vermont Constitution states that every child must be afforded substantially equal access to a quality basic education. This is not the case. Act 173 aims to provide a teaching and learning environment to accomplish better quality instruction. However we ALL must have the resources to accomplish this, and the actual law must be followed.

Thank you for your ongoing work - I appreciate the opportunity to testify.