

**Testimony of Paul Forlenza, Lincoln Selectboard,
before the House Education Committee
Regarding the Withdrawal Process in 22-0275**

February 23, 2022

My name is Paul Forlenza and I am the Vice Chair of the Lincoln Selectboard and also the Selectboard liaison to Save Community Schools.

Thank you for allowing me to submit written testimony regarding 22-0275 Withdrawing initiated before July 2022, BSJ Draft 3.1, 2.17.22

I testified two weeks ago asking the Committee to make provisions for allowing Lincoln to continue under the existing withdrawal process even after the July 1 effective date of your legislation. I appreciate that you have included this in the current draft as Sec. 6.

I applaud your commitment to support community schools as expressed in the bill you passed last year, H.106 (Act 67), An act relating to equitable access to a high-quality education through community schools. In Lincoln, we certainly agree with your findings in the Act that “Community schools are important centers for building community connection and resilience. When learning extends beyond the walls of the school through active engagement with community partners as with place-based learning, relationships expand and deepen, community strengths are highlighted, and opportunities for building vitality surface through shared learning.”

I encourage you in rewriting Chapter 11 to continue to support community schools as set out in the findings of Act 67.

I have three minor, but important, suggestions for improving Sec 6 of 22-0275 which allows towns already in the process of withdrawing to continue to do so under existing statute.

1. Current 16 V.S.A. § 724

There are references to § 724 in several places in the draft. I suggest you add to § 724 a ninety (90) day limitation on all actions to be taken by the remaining towns in the district. This would require the remaining towns to vote within 90 days of being notified by the Secretary of State that the vote of the petitioning town had been certified.

While § 721 contains this limitation, § 724 does not. The result was Lincoln had to wait 5 months after its vote to withdraw for the remaining towns in MAUSD to vote on ratifying Lincoln's vote.

Also, I recommend that you identify the petitioning town's clerk to facilitate the voting date for the remaining towns and coordinate the wording of the article to be voted by the remaining towns.

2. Typo in (c)(1), page 16

The text is "If the State Board determines the preparedness is unlikely, it shall issue a written report...." I believe the word "unlikely" was meant to be the word "likely".

3. School Board Members Sec. 6 (d)(1), page 18

The implication here is that there would be three (3) school board members. I currently serve on the Lincoln Selectboard and we found three (3) members were not sufficient to get the work done. We have now expanded to 5 members and there is a more balanced distribution of work. I suggest the school board be allowed to have up to five (5) members.

Thank you for your consideration of these three suggestions for improving 22-0275.

forlenza@gmavt.net

802-989-1070