

Dear Chair Webb and members of the House Committee on Education,

Thank you for taking up S.13. As a member of The Coalition for Vermont Student Equity, I would just like to remind the committee of the importance of narrowing the scope of S.13, as you heard from your various witnesses today. That's not to say the other topics aren't important, they are. But they should be taken up separately.

S.13 is about implementing the scientifically and mathematically proven recommendations of the Pupil Weighting Factors Report. And while the overarching topic of equity is of great importance, This bill and the task force it creates, are about fixing the two decades and running, inequitable pupil weighting formula.

You can and should take the recommendations from this report, which was requested and paid for by The Legislature, and fix what is not only inequitable, but almost certainly unconstitutional and doesn't live up to the requirements set forth in the Brigham decision.

I would applaud an attempt to take a look at equity in all aspects of the education funding and taxing system. But this is not the time. Not when we have empirical evidence that the current weighting formula is inequitable and we know how to fix the formula. Correct pupil weighting formula itself doesn't equal equity, but having an equitable weighting formula would be a huge step, no, leap, towards equity in education funding.

Let the S.13 task force focus on how to implement the corrected weights, per the Pupil Factors Weighting Report. Then, if it's the will of the Legislature, create a task force to focus on the bigger picture of equity in education. We will gladly be your partner in such an effort.

A number of members on your committee have discussed why narrowing the scope of S.13 is not only the right thing to do, but what's necessary in order to correct the inequity in the weighting formula. I hope you will all heed their comments, as well as the letter sent by the Social Equity Caucus which appeared in the list of documents for today's (4-21-2021,) hearing.

Thank you very much,
Marc