

## TESTIMONY

**Testimony To:** Senate Committee on Education  
**Respectfully Submitted by:** Daniel M. French, Ed.D., Secretary of Education  
**Subject:** H.716 – Miscellaneous Education Bill  
**Date:** April 13, 2022

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Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill.

### **Section 2 – Partial Rule Delay**

I think it would be problematic to have schools in a district operating under different rules since special education is a central function under supervisory unions or districts, not schools. I think it would be equally problematic to have districts operating under different rules since students may move from one district to another during a school year. I think the standard of, “the request is reasonable and contains adequate information to ensure compliance by the proposed compliance date” is too loose and does not give the agency adequate criteria to deny such a request if it is not in the best interests of students.

### **Section 3 – Civic Education Report**

This is not a policy priority for the education system relative to the education recovery work and other existing policies. If the agency was charged with writing such a report, it would be a very brief report.

### **Section 4 – Crime Insurance Coverage**

I am not aware of a concern that this language is attempting to address. In my experience, school district treasurers are officers of a school district and are therefore covered by school district insurance in the performance of their official responsibilities. The role of “collector” is less familiar with me as a school district office. I believe town officials function as collectors of education property tax revenues and are probably already covered under town insurance. I am unaware of any school district that has a separate “collector” office. This language should probably be reviewed for modernization.

## Section 5 – Educator Workforce Development

I do not support this language for the following reasons.

- There is a need to expand the educator workforce, but it is not clear to what extent this program would help meet that need, e.g., how many people it would help relative to the size of the investment, what data support providing these types of supports, etc.
- Stylistically, I disagree with this type of appropriation. Ideally, from my perspective, the General Assembly would identify the desired policy outcomes, appropriate the necessary funds, and then charge the agency with administering the policy and ensuring the policy outcomes are achieved. The agency would do this through the regular state procurement process by publishing an RFP for these services, going out to bid, and then contracting for the services. The contract would include performance terms to ensure the desired outcomes are met. The agency would then report back to the General Assembly on the policy outcomes. This language circumvents the regular procurement process and bypasses normal administrative oversight by an executive branch entity that would typically be charged, and held responsible for, achieving the desired policy outcomes.
- It is not clear to me how the appropriated amount was determined or if VT-NEA is the best vendor to provide these services. Following the regular procurement process would ensure both the value and quality of the services.
- I do not support using the Education Fund for this appropriation. I do not believe it would be an authorized appropriation under the law.
- The amount of the appropriation seems large relative to the scale of the program. By way of comparison, the General Assembly directed the agency to reserve only \$200,000 out of its state-level special education funds to provide professional development for Act 173 special education reform for all districts in the state.
- The agency was never consulted in the development of this proposal, so it is not clear to me if the agency would have adequate capacity to take on the new administrative worked outlined in the proposal.