



Supporting Learners & Leaders

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To: Senate Committee on Education
Date: March 18, 2022
Subject: H. 716 Miscellaneous Education Changes
From: Jay Nichols

For the record, Jay Nichols, Executive Director Vermont Principals' Association. Thank you for the opportunity to allow me to testify today on H. 716 the Miscellaneous Ed. Bill from the House and your Draft no. 1.1 Amendment.

1. The change regarding the census block grant to allow for a Supervisory Union or Unified School District to use the average amount of State special education expenditures calculated for 2018 through 2020 or 2019 through 2021 whichever one is more advantageous to the school system is a welcomed change. In a conversation in the House, I asked Brad James about this very concept and I'm happy you have decided to make that modification. It is important that we do whatever we can from a fiscal, political, policy, and professional development approach to support schools as they make this major shift from a reimbursement system to a census block grant system.
2. In the House, those of us who represent the individuals who have to do the work to actually implement Act 173 testified that we feel rule changes that would change rules in Vermont on what is termed Adverse Effect and Specific Learning Disability should be delayed until July 1, 2023. As the committee is well aware, school staff are overwhelmed. To expect them to make rule changes, in many cases with no professional learning, is not responsible. This is especially the case when the people that have the most work to do in this area are teachers both in the classroom and especially in special education. We are talking a few short months before the start of the next school year with an exhausted group of school employees who don't typically work during the summer months.
3. I want to be clear, the VPA supports these rule 2360 changes. We just ask that they go in effect a year later than the rest of Act 173 which is already a monumental shift. No need to add extra complexity at this point.
4. I am no expert in this area whatsoever; however, we are fortunate in Vermont to have at least three experts that could talk to your committee including two of whom testified in House Ed. Less than a month ago. I would suggest you take testimony from Mary

Lundeen, Jessica Spencer, and/or Meagan Roy regarding the special education rule changes and why waiting for a year to implement is an important approach to take.

Respectfully submitted,

Jay Nichols