Chair Campion and members of the Vermont Senate Education Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to present and answer questions this afternoon. You are right that Vermont, like the rest of the country, is facing a desperate need for educators. Schools that only five years ago received dozens of applications for a single teaching position are now struggling to find qualified applicants. This is compounded by unprecedented numbers of educators leaving the practice, increasingly in the middle of the school year. Furthermore, schools and the state are trying to rectify historic wrongs, in part by recruiting educators who look more like the students they are teaching. And internal AOE data support this trend. For example, temporary licensure applications (emergency and provisional licenses) have doubled since 2016, reaching 700 unique applications in 2021, strongly suggesting that schools are having a harder time finding qualified candidates.

Vermont has a broad range of educator preparation options; furthermore, due to structure, focus, and geography, they complement, rather than compete with, each other. Traditional educator preparation–four years of undergraduate education with a semester-long student teaching experience during the senior year–is the most common design, but there are many others to reflect the various needs of potential candidates. The Agency of Education's Peer Review is one of those pathways, developed in the late 1980s (moving to the AOE in 2001) for non-traditional entrants into education, though it is not the only one available in the state (Teacher Apprenticeship Program (TAP) at Champlain College, Spark, Upper Valley Education Institute). Peer Review allows candidates with practical experience to demonstrate their knowledge, skills, and dispositions through a portfolio that they defend in an interview with experienced educators who hold the endorsement sought.

As with the growth in applications for provisional licensure, we have seen a corresponding growth in Peer Review applications for initial licensure, from 123 in the 2017/18 academic year to 185 in the 2020/21 academic year. (It is worth noting, though, that only roughly 40% of Peer Review candidates are employed on a provisional or emergency license.) There has been a similar decline in candidates who have completed traditional education preparation routes. Among applicants for Peer Review, about three-fourths of candidates are seeking initial licensure while the remainder are adding an additional endorsement to an existing educator license. And, about 40% of all Peer Review applicants are eventually recommended for licensure. This means that there are many potential candidates who express interest in earning a license through Peer Review, but never complete the process. We are confident that a program like GrowVT-Ed would support more candidates to become Vermont teachers. We appreciate the effort and the detail provided by Julie and Colin.

That said, we believe that it is extremely doubtful that, even with extensive supports, completer rates would rise above two-thirds of applicants. Many potential candidates submit an application in the moment, but quickly turn away when

they understand that earning a license requires a diligent commitment, as it would for entrance into any other profession. The goal of supporting 150 candidates as outlined in the initial GrowVT-Ed proposal seems to be about the limit of candidates we would expect to complete Peer Review. Additionally, if the program were to expand beyond 150 annual completers, the AOE would not have the capacity to process and support candidates at current staffing levels. Finally, by design, the number of potential candidates for Peer Review is practically limited by the population with rigorous content area experience who are ready to move to the classroom. Just as though there are a number of talented citizens with novel experiences who benefit from the Vermont legal apprenticeship program, that number is finite. Designing multiple pathways will ultimately be more fruitful than focusing solely on further expansion of Peer Review.

Rather, the Education Quality team at the AOE sees GrowVT-Ed as one of many potential pathways to help grow the Vermont teacher workforce. Additionally, funding targeted at further expanding the present proposal could otherwise fully or partially support several other options, including:

- Grow Your Own programs—coordinated regionally to support interested citizens currently working as paraeducators in schools. Instituted with cooperation with Vermont EPPs, a series of courses could be designed under a cohort model to help potential candidates meet the Core Teaching Standards. A loan forgiveness program could be designed for educators who commit to their hiring district for a certain number of years.
- External Recruiter—a recruiter (think retired Vermont administrator or teacher leader) could be hired to recruit candidates from education preparation programs through the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic states. Furthermore, such a recruiter could work particularly closely with HBCUs, other minority-serving institutions of higher education, and affinity groups for marginalized populations in education preparation programs.
- Teacher Shortage Bonus—funds targeted at attracting and retaining educators in our hardest to fill endorsement areas.
- Support for traditional education preparation programs
  - "2 & 2" programs—two years at a community colleges and 2 years at a traditional program as a pathway that particularly benefits first generation college students, New Americans, and other non-traditional college attendees
  - Loan forgiveness and other financial incentives for completers of VSC or UVM routes
- Retired educators—eliminating the earning cap for retired educators drawing from the state teachers retirement system who are interested in a short-term return to the classroom.

Each of the above ideas would attract additional candidates to the profession, rather than relying only on an expanded Peer Review pathway.

Thank you to my colleagues at the Vermont Agency of Education for the help in gathering data for this presentation on short notice: Amy Scalabrini, Andrew Prowten, Maija Schmidt, and Ryan McCormick.

Respectfully submitted,

Patrick Halladay

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Vermont Agency of Education

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