



VERMONT PRINCIPALS' ASSOCIATION
MEMO
From the Desk of Jay Nichols

To: Senate Education Committee
Date: March 18, 2021
Subject: H.81 Collective Bargaining

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this brief testimony. Title 16 § 2102 Commission on Public School Employee Health Benefits created a commission. The purpose was to move negotiations over health benefits away from the local district level to the state level.

The employee commission that was created by the law completely ignored school employees that happen to be administrators.

(b) Composition and appointment

(1) The commission shall have 10 members, of whom five shall be representatives of school employees and five shall be representatives of school employers

(2) (A) The representatives of school employees shall be appointed as follows:

(i) four members appointed by the labor organization representing the greatest number of teachers, administrators, and municipal school employees in this State; and

(ii) one member appointed by the labor organization representing the second-greatest number of teachers, administrators, and municipal school employees in this State

This union-centric approach has left school administrators essentially out in the cold with no representation. We respectfully ask that the law be amended to require at least one representative to be a school administrator appointed by the Vermont Principals' Association. We have almost 700 members and they feel as though they are not adequately represented. This is not to be critical of the current commission members. However, having someone on the labor side of the equation that actually has an understanding of the roles and massive responsibilities of school leadership is only fair since our members are required to adhere to any agreement made regarding their health benefits. Principals and other education administrators have traditionally taken less pay often in order to receive more in benefits. Most administrators in Vermont did not pay 20% of insurance prior to the new law. Now with the proposed changes by H.81 most principals might be hit with a sliding scale that would adversely affect them. This despite the fact that administrators work many more hours, days, and weeks in the school year than most support staff and teachers and unquestionably have a great deal more responsibility. The fact that we have a shortage in people willing to heed the call of school leadership leads me to believe that we should not propose laws that will further limit the rationale for talented educators to pursue educational leadership. Yesterday, I heard Senate Education committee members discuss after the testimony of Julie Filiberti that having a seat at the table is important. Well, that is our number one request today. School leaders are employees who do

not have a seat at the table and it would only be equitable and just to rectify that situation.