



Vermont
Superintendents
Association



To: Senate Committee on Education

From: Vermont School Boards Association
Vermont Superintendents Association
Vermont Principals' Association

Date: February 24, 2021

Re: S.32 - school wellness; feminine hygiene products

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on S.32. Our Associations have collaborated on our review of the bill and are submitting this testimony as a collaborative effort. Each of us will speak to specific questions from Committee members.

Updating School Wellness Program Definition and Model Policy

Section 1 of S.32 adds "comprehensive health education" as defined in 16 V.S.A. Section 131 to the definition of "wellness program." Section 1 also specifies that the Advisory Council on Wellness and Comprehensive Health must (1) include at least three members with expertise in health services, health education or health policy and (2) meet not less than twice per year.

Section 2 of S.32 requires the Agency of Education, in collaboration with the Advisory Council on Wellness and Comprehensive Health, to update and distribute to school districts a model wellness program policy, using the expanded definition of "wellness program" on or before January 15, 2022. The bill requires the model wellness program policy to reflect nationally accepted best practices for comprehensive health education and school wellness policies, such as guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child Model.

Currently, [Vermont's model wellness policy](#) establishes goals for nutrition promotion and education, nutrition guidelines, physical activity and other school-based activities that are designed to promote student wellness. Under S.32, the goals are expanded to include comprehensive health education, including such topics as mental health, family health, community health, public health and world health.

Our associations support the changes in sections 1 and 2 which are meant to update the definition of wellness program and the model wellness program policy.

Menstrual Hygiene Products

Section 3 of the bill requires school districts and approved independent schools to make menstrual hygiene products available at no cost in a majority of gender-neutral bathrooms and bathrooms designated for females that are generally used by females in any of grades five through 12.

Our associations support the purpose of section 3 which is to ensure that female students attending a public school or an approved independent school have access to menstrual hygiene products at no cost and without the embarrassment of having to request them.

We note that the bill requires school districts to bear the cost of supplying menstrual hygiene products (making it an unfunded mandate) and that this cost is unknown. Additionally, we assume that storage devices or dispensers would be required so that there is a way to store the products in a sanitary manner - this will add to the cost. It is also important to consider the regular use of school facilities by community groups for meetings and events which could impact the level of supplies schools will need to have on hand.

Unfunded mandates in this bill and other bills currently under consideration in the General Assembly are incremental increases which may not seem significant in isolation but which can add up to significant impacts on local school district budgets and, ultimately the Education Fund.