



To: Senate Education Committee  
From: Sue Ceglowski, Executive Director, Vermont School Boards Association  
Re: S.13  
Date: March 10, 2021

Thank you for inviting testimony from the Vermont School Boards Association on S.13 relating to the implementation of the Pupil Weighting Factors Report (Report”).

The VSBA’s official public policy position on issues of interest to School Boards in Vermont is derived from its Resolutions (submitted by Member School Boards and the Resolutions Committee and voted on at each Annual Meeting); and when there is no applicable resolution, by vote of the VSBA Board on a motion made during a VSBA Board Meeting.

As stated in its Executive Summary, the Report “stems from concerns about the extent to which the existing funding formula is effective in equalizing educational costs, and by extension, opportunities to learn for students across the state.”

VSBA has resolutions addressing equalization and equity in high quality learning opportunities:

Resolution Addressing Equalization

VSBA supports the maintenance of “. . . substantially equal access to a quality basic education . . .” for all of Vermont’s children as required by the Vermont Supreme Court in its *Brigham* decision, and as legislatively promised in 16 V.S.A. Section 1. It is the duty of the State of Vermont to ensure fiscal equity for all school districts to allow equal educational opportunities for all students. Significant state expenditure is required to equalize the financial resources of districts and maintain educational opportunities of students.

Resolution Addressing Equity, Quality and Cost Effectiveness

The VSBA supports initiatives that are designed to create greater equity in high quality learning opportunities and to achieve cost effectiveness. Such initiatives shall focus on the needs of students and taxpayers of the state of Vermont. Any initiative that impacts

our governance structure or funding system must be designed in a way that reflects our community values. School boards are in the best position to inform this process and must be fully engaged in this effort. The VSBA will work with the General Assembly and our members to support initiatives at the state, regional and local level that will address our challenges while maintaining and strengthening local communities.

### VSBA Board Motions Related to the Weighting Study

Since the release of the Report on December 24, 2019 - the VSBA Board has voted on 3 motions relative to the Report.

At the March, 2020 VSBA Board meeting Professor Tammy Kolbe presented the Report and its findings to the VSBA Board. The above VSBA Resolutions relate to equalizing the financial resources of districts and ensuring equity in education. To determine an advocacy position more specific to the Pupil Weighting Factors Report, the VSBA Board voted and approved two motions at the March, 2020 meeting:

1. "VSBA fully supports the findings as presented in the weighting study." – passed unanimously, with one abstention
2. "VSBA requests the legislature to thoughtfully and expeditiously establish an implementation plan in pursuit of equity of outcomes for all students and one that is designed to build capacity within our systems to absorb the changes in funding due to changes in weights." – passed unanimously, with one abstention

Due to lack of progress on motion #2 in the spring of 2020, the VSBA passed a third motion at its June meeting, voting unanimously to approve the following position to be communicated to key Legislative leaders after the General Assembly completed its June session and recessed until August:

3. "The VSBA advocates for the establishment in this biennium (*note: this would have been the legislative session of 2020*) of a Working Group to address implementation of the Weighting Study recommendations with a set timeline for the creation of the Working Group product." - passed unanimously

VSBA's President, Neil Odell, sent the [letter to committee chairs](#) of the House and Senate Education, House Ways & Means and Senate Finance Committees in early August. Since a Working Group was not established in the last biennium, the VSBA's position on the Report continues to be represented by the motions from March of 2020: support for the findings of the Report and a thoughtful and expeditious implementation plan in pursuit of equity for all students.

We are providing the above information on resolutions and motions to convey VSBA's strong support for the findings of the Report and a thoughtful and expeditious implementation plan. S.13's formation of a Task Force on the Implementation of the Pupil Weighting Factors Report is a step in the right direction. Establishing a plan to implement the Report is important work which should not be delayed. Thank you.