

February 8, 2022

Vermont Senate Education Committee
Testimony of Jeffrey Francis

Vermont Superintendents Association



Vermont
Superintendents
Association

S. 283 - Miscellaneous Changes to Education Laws

Thank you for inviting testimony on S.283

I will speak to sections 2, 3 and 4 of the bill.

Section 2 - 16 V.S.A. § 1162. SUSPENSION OR EXPULSION OF STUDENTS

We support the proposed language to add approved independent schools and private prekindergarten programs to the education settings prohibited from expelling or suspending students under the age of eight except in instances where the student poses an imminent threat of harm or danger to others in the school.

Section 3 - REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE IMPACT OF STANDARDIZING THE ENTRANCE AGE THRESHOLD FOR PUBLIC SCHOOL KINDERGARTEN

We don't have any objection to the report and recommendations contemplated by the proposal. That stated, I have not conferred with superintendents specifically on the need for this study and the issue of entrance age thresholds for public school kindergarten has rarely been brought to my attention as a matter of urgency or one that is especially problematic currently. I have not spoken with Secretary French about the interest in this study on the part of the Agency or the current capacity for the Agency to undertake it. For that reason, my suggestion is that you invite testimony from the Agency on those questions. VSA will defer to the Agency out of respect for their capacity and their perspective on the need for the study.

Section 4 - REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR A STATEWIDE UNIFORM SCHOOL CALENDAR

We don't have any objection to the report and recommendations contemplated by the proposal. Over the years, there has been discussion about the merits of operating on a uniform calendar statewide. A uniform calendar developed with an eye to the specific needs of learners would presumably have benefits. That stated, local control and related interests have thwarted any serious efforts to create a uniform calendar in the past. Here again, we would look to the perspective of Secretary French and the Agency regarding whether to undertake this effort at this particular time.

