



Vermont
Superintendents
Association

**Vermont State Senate
Vermont Senate Education Committee**

**Testimony of Jeffrey Francis, Executive Director for the Vermont
Superintendents Association**

January 28, 2022

Weighting - English Language Learners - Weighting v. Categorical Aid

Thank you for the opportunity to share my perspective, on behalf of the Vermont Superintendents Association, with respect to the question of whether to address funding support for serving English Language Learners through utilizing a weight or through categorical aid.

I know that you have heard from a number of witnesses and others with strong views on the topic. Some of those witnesses represent districts serving larger numbers of English Language Learners and others have a specific focus on achieving the most equitable funding system that we can achieve. Some, of course, have an interest in both.

In developing this testimony, I reviewed much of the written testimony submitted to your Committee and watched some of your earlier proceedings.

Based on those reviews, and my own thinking, I find myself in agreement with those who believe the better approach is to rely on the recommended adjustment to the ELL weight, rather than categorical aid, to support the funding needs for English Language Learners.

Testimony supporting the weighting approach is compelling in that it argues persuasively that the funding mechanism for ELL should be the same as will be applied to address the other categories (cost factors) that require additional funding support and are addressed in the Weighting Study.

I understand and agree with the point that the funding needs for English Language Learners should not be addressed through a different approach (categorical aid v. adjusting the weights) than that applied to address the other cost factors.

On that basis, I believe that the empirically derived weights for all cost factors, including ELL, should be consistently applied, as recommended by a number of your witnesses. This is a

matter of equity and also, in my mind, supports a more understandable and less complex funding system.

If, as has been suggested, there is an interest in, or a need to, provide very targeted assistance for districts with a smaller number of English Language Learners through a limited categorical aid feature, I believe that would be appropriate, but in general the reliance should be on utilizing the same method (weighting) to address all of the cost factors.

Thank you.