



Vermont
Superintendents
Association

**Senate Education Committee
Testimony of Jeffrey Francis, Executive Director for the Vermont
Superintendents Association
April 1, 2022**

PCB Sampling in Schools

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on PCB sampling in schools.

For the past eight months or so, I have been in communications with Commissioner Peter Walke of the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) as well as with Patricia Coppolino, Senior Environmental Program Manager who is the staff person at DEC with principal responsibility for this initiative and have been impressed with their thoughtful consideration around all elements of this work.

I have also been in touch with personnel at the Agency of Education and the Department of Health regarding the initiative and have appreciated their efforts at providing useful information as well.

Several weeks ago, I hosted a meeting including Commissioner Walke, Secretary French, Dr. Levine and associated staff persons with representatives of the VSA, VSBA, VPA, VASBO and facilities managers. The goal was to learn how the implementation planning for the sampling was progressing and to discuss mutual interests and concerns.

At the meeting we learned about the work of the various state agencies with an emphasis on the PCB sampling implementation by DEC and the PCB level determinations by DOH.

After hearing from Commissioner Walke and Patricia Coppolino about the plans for the sampling rollout, the extensive consideration that they have given to scheduling determinations for which schools to sample first, as well as the technical and

communications supports that they will be providing to school districts, VSA fully endorses the request that the timeline for completing the sampling be extended to 2026.

In fact, given our understanding of the logistics that DEC is managing, coupled with its capacity and that of schools, VSA joins DEC in the extension request.

It is important to note that the extension will not delay the start of sampling. Sampling is currently scheduled to begin within weeks. The extension will allow for DEC and school districts to manage and participate in this work on a logical timeline that considers the full scope and complexity of this initiative. Schools most likely to see PCB contamination will be sampled first under the DEC process.

A pressing need is for legislative action to address the cost implications that will inevitably confront communities and the state when actionable levels of pcb contamination are discovered in our community schools. Currently, the matter of funding for mitigation and remediation has not been addressed, and it needs to be.

School districts have not budgeted, nor do they have contingencies, for what can only be regarded as unpredictable, unanticipated costs. That means that when PCBs are identified, a timely, well-organized response will be impeded with resulting issues and problems.

We are asking that the General Assembly act to address the funding issue this session. The establishment of a funding source should coincide with the start of the sampling implementation.

Thank you.