

1 H.385

2 Introduced by Representatives Rachelson of Burlington, Burditt of West
3 Rutland, Logan of Burlington, Stebbins of Burlington, and Toof
4 of St. Albans Town

5 Referred to Committee on

6 Date:

7 Subject: Education; school districts; governance

8 Statement of purpose of bill as introduced: This bill proposes to require the
9 Secretary of Education to develop a detailed proposal to move the State to a
10 single, statewide school district similar to the education governance model in
11 Hawaii.

12 An act relating to creating a statewide school district

13 It is hereby enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Vermont:

14 Sec. 1. STATEWIDE SCHOOL DISTRICT; PROPOSAL; REPORT

15 (a) Findings.

16 (1) In 2019 Vermont had the lowest student-per-school district average
17 in the United States with an average of 315 students per school district.
18 Nationally, the average size of a school district was 3,382 students.

19 (2) The next lowest five states in this category had three times as many
20 students per school district as Vermont's 2019 average.

1 (3) In 2019, Vermont had 54 Supervisory Unions, 52 union school
2 districts, and 327 principals.

3 (4) The role of the voters and taxpayers is to approve school budgets and
4 payment of education taxes.

5 (5) In fiscal year 2019, \$136,962,560.00 (28 percent of \$1.29 billion)
6 funded education for 80,000 students. In fiscal year 2018, the income yield
7 was \$11,990.00 per equalized pupil.

8 (6) Since 1999, Vermont's expenditure per student has increased while
9 the average daily membership has decreased from 103,893 in 1997 to
10 approximately 78,000 in 2019.

11 (7) Vermont has a unique education finance system with a statewide
12 funding formula coupled with local administration. The tax formula and
13 process are confusing and not easily understood. Currently, a district's
14 homestead tax rates are determined by its education spending per equalized
15 pupil.

16 (8) Health care bargained on a statewide basis is more efficient than
17 local bargaining, and statewide bargaining on other terms of teachers' contracts
18 would also be more efficient than local bargaining. Vermont lags in average
19 salary of teachers compared to the United States and New England.

20 (b) Proposal to transition to a single statewide school district. In order to
21 maximize the ability to provide equitable educational opportunities to the

1 State’s small, declining student population while also minimizing
2 administrative and overhead costs, the Secretary of Education shall develop a
3 proposal by which the State shall transition to a single statewide school district.
4 In developing the proposal, the Secretary shall consider the education
5 governance model in Hawaii, including the positive and negative effects that
6 transition to the model has had on educational opportunities, outcomes, and
7 budgets in Hawaii and on the provision and funding of special education
8 services in that state. The Secretary shall also investigate the need for waivers
9 or other federal actions necessary to transition Vermont to a statewide school
10 district.

11 (c) Report. On or before January 15, 2024, the Secretary shall present a
12 detailed proposal, including a timeline, to the House and Senate Committees
13 on Education to transition the State to a single statewide school district by
14 fiscal year 2027.

15 Sec. 2. EFFECTIVE DATE

16 This act shall take effect on passage.