
TESTIMONY

Testimony To: House Committee on Education

Respectfully Submitted by: Ted Fisher, Director of Communications and Legislative Affairs

Subject: **SSDDMS Mandate Repeal Language**

Date: January 11, 2023

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment on behalf of the Agency of Education on the draft language under consideration. The AOE agrees that this language achieves the desired result of repealing the mandate (originally in Act 11 of 2018) that all Supervisory Unions (SU/SDs) implement the SSDDMS. The Agency appreciates the committee's speed and care in taking up this issue early in the session.

Comments on Draft Language:

The Agency proposes several clarifying edits to the language throughout (see next section for full text markup). The preponderance of these edits are to clarify the voluntary nature of the program and assist with continued implementation of the contract.

Two recommendations are more substantive and worth outlining in more detail:

Strike Required Consultation with AOE

The AOE recommends striking the provision of Sec. X of this draft language: Sec. 16 of Act 66 of 2021 as amended by Act 185 of 2022 (2) to the effect that an SU/SD must consult with AOE before joining or leaving the program. This requirement is an artifact of the program pause originally implemented in Act 66 and is not needed. SU/SDs or districts that choose to join the program will work closely with the AOE and the program contractor (currently PowerSchool) in order to implement the software system. No language in session law is required to facilitate this process.

Strike Reporting Requirement

The AOE does not support Sec. Y as drafted and would recommend striking the section in its entirety. Currently the AOE is not required to report on implementation of the Uniform Chart of Accounts (UCOA), making this in effect the addition of a new reporting requirement.

AOE does not believe that any information yielded would be valuable to the General Assembly in the long term. The AOE intends to oversee implementation and compliance with school district accounting standards



through the District Quality Standards (DQS) and Quality Assurance Rules (QAR) and could provide more meaningful and useful information through updates on that work.

Recommended Clarifying Edits

AOE recommends several line edits to Secs. W and X for the purposes of:

- Stressing the voluntary nature of the program
- Ensuring that existing and new users continue to be supported
- Alignment to contractual realities in the system
- Clarity and alignment with the program's name

Mark Up Language

Strikethrough is original language from counsel. AOE recommended changes are marked in **bold blue**.

Sec. W. 2018 (Sp. Sess.) Acts and Resolves No. 11, Sec. E.500.1, as amended by 2019 Acts and Resolves No. 72, Sec. E.500.5, 2021 Acts and Resolves No. 66, Sec. 15, and 2022 Acts and Resolves No. 185, Sec. E.500.2, is further amended to read:

Sec. E.500.1. SHARED SCHOOL DISTRICT ~~FINANCIAL~~ DATA
MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

~~(a) Not later than December 31, 2024, all Vermont supervisory unions, supervisory districts, school districts, and independent technical center districts shall utilize the same school finance and financial data management system. The system shall be selected by the Agency of Education per State procurement guidelines. [Repealed.]~~

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Sec. X. 2021 Acts and Resolves No. 66, Sec. 16, as amended by 2022 Acts and Resolves No. 185, Sec. E.500.3, is further amended to read:

Sec. 16. ~~PAUSE~~ **SUSPENSION OF** IMPLEMENTATION OF SHARED
SCHOOL DISTRICT ~~FINANCIAL~~ DATA MANAGEMENT
SYSTEM

Notwithstanding Sec. E.500.1 of 2018 (Sp. Sess.) Acts and Resolves No. 11, as amended, the **mandatory** implementation of the Shared School District Data Management System (SSDDMS) shall be **paused until July 1, 2023 permanently suspended**, provided that:

(1) the Agency of Education and its contractor for implementation of the system shall continue to support **existing** users **and any new adopters**, as of the date of enactment of this act, of the system; **and within the confines of the existing contract.**

~~(2) a supervisory union, supervisory district, school district, or independent technical center district may implement or leave SSDDMS during the pause~~

~~period after consultation with the Agency of Education and upon approval by its governing body.~~

Sec. Y. 2021 Acts and Resolves No. 66, Sec. 17, as amended by 2022 Acts and Resolves No. 185, Sec. E.500.4, is further amended to read:

~~**Sec. 17. AGENCY OF EDUCATION; REPORTS**~~

~~(a) On or before June 30, 2021 January 15, 2024 and quarterly annually thereafter until March 31, 2025, the Agency of Education shall provide a written report to the General Assembly and the Vermont Association of School Business Officials on the status of improving and implementing the Shared School District Data Management System, including the status of: and any challenges in using the Uniform Chart of Accounts. [Repealed.]~~

- ~~(1) system outages; [Repealed.]~~
- ~~(2) bank reconciliations; [Repealed.]~~
- ~~(3) reporting enhancements; [Repealed.]~~
- ~~(4) systems enhancements; and [Repealed.]~~
- ~~(5) user training. [Repealed.]~~

~~(b) In preparing the quarterly annual reports, the Agency shall collect input from the Vermont Association of School Business Officials and professional accounting firms engaged in the process of conducting school district audits in Vermont. [Repealed.]~~

Sec. Z. EFFECTIVE DATE

Secs. W, X, and Y shall take effect on passage.