



To: House Human Services

From: Jay Nichols , Executive Director

Date: April 12 , 2023

Subject: S.56

Good afternoon, for the record, Jay Nichols, Executive Director of the Vermont Principals' Association. My purpose today is to testify on S.56, my comments will be focused primarily on the issue of 4 year olds in public schools. In full disclosure, the VPA has a position on this issue that calls for all 4 year olds to have the option to be in public schools for full day, full week, full school year service.

Now, I know I'm not here to talk about what would be best for all Vermont four-year-olds educationally and that you folks are only responding to S.56 which had the four-year-old public pre k gutted out of it in the Senate in favor of yet another study. I would be glad to discuss the language in H.208 around prekindergarten and 4 year olds in public schools that is supported by the Vermont School Boards Association, Vermont Superintendents Association, Vermont Principals' Association, and the Vermont National Education Association.

My testimony to you today is to ask that if you are going to take up S.56, at least provide full ADM for school districts that are already doing the right thing in providing full day programming to students, in many cases where there are no other options. We have communities that have no private pre K programs. We have others that have programs but with waiting lists. In this void, many districts have stepped up and started full day programs - but under current law, they can't count those students for financial purposes as part of their per pupil weighting more than .43. At the very least, the House should allow pre k students that are in full day programs to be counted the same as Kindergarten through fifth grade students.

The study that is provided for in the bill is much too complex and answers many questions that we already have answers to. We will participate in any study but we don't think supporting the status quo is the best course of action and we have been told by a number of legislators that this is essentially what this study is about - keep the status quo at least for now and block the movement to put 4 year olds in public schools. So again, at the very least, the General Assembly should reward districts that are already trying to do the right thing for four year olds in our state by allowing full ADM for those students. This at least allows for local control and gives school districts the opportunity to provide full day, full week, full school year programming in places that literally have no other options.

Respectfully submitted,

Jay Nichols