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Chair Kornheiser, Chair Cummings, Chair Campion, and Chair Conlon,

Thank you for inviting me here to address the critical issue of equitable school funding. My name is Tom Flanagan and I am the Superintendent of Burlington School District. We are the largest single-town school district in Vermont. Last school year, we served more than 3,300 students PreK to 12, across more than 12 sites.

I am here to express my strong belief that we should continue to support the new weights in Act 127 to ensure the state funding model is equitable.

I am deeply concerned that as the impact of the CLA has become more apparent, some are looking to place blame on the weights in Act 127, which seek to finally right the moral wrongs that for generations have impacted towns serving higher percentages of students who have been historically marginalized in our education system.

Despite a City-wide reappraisal in 2021, this year Burlington witnessed a significant CLA decline of 7.87%. This has a direct and substantial impact on our school budget's projected tax impact, **causing our local tax rate to be nine percentage points higher** due to increases in property values - something beyond any school board or superintendent's ability to control. In addition to these challenges, this is the first year of borrowing on a new high school in Burlington; this year will result in the biggest increase in the bond.

As a result of these factors, in order to put forth a tax impact of less than 10%, we would need to lay off nearly 12% of our workforce. The issue we face is not unique to Burlington. Many of my colleagues across the state are in similar positions and many school districts are under similar pressures which could lead to failed budgets on Town Meeting Day and chaos in Vermont's education system that would negatively impact children.

While some may suggest a legislative revisit of the new weights in Act 127 to solve this problem, I urge a different approach. The State should address the serious impacts caused by the CLA, without conflating it with the weights in Act 127. These are distinct

issues and should be treated separately. Act 127 addressed historical inequities and we should not retreat from that while we address other challenges, such as the CLA and other costs that drive education spending. It would be counterproductive and damaging to unravel the equity achievements represented in Act 127 for the sake of addressing issues unrelated to educational spending.

In conclusion, I appeal to this committee for support and solutions that can mitigate the CLA impacts while preserving the integrity and progress of Act 127.