

1 H.887

2 Senators Bray, Brock, Chittenden, Cummings, and MacDonald move that  
3 the Senate propose the House to amend the bill as recommended by the  
4 Committee on Finance with the following proposals of the amendment thereto:

5 First: By striking Sec. 1, the Commission on the Future of Public  
6 Education; reports, and its reader assistance heading in their entireties and  
7 inserting in lieu thereof a new reader assistance heading and Sec. 1 to read as  
8 follows:

9 \* \* \* Education Finance Study Committee \* \* \*

10 Sec. 1. EDUCATION FINANCE STUDY COMMITTEE

11 (a) Creation. There is created the Education Finance Study Committee to  
12 study and recommend changes to move towards a more sustainable and  
13 affordable education system while maintaining a system that ensures  
14 substantially equal educational opportunities for all Vermont students that  
15 allows them to achieve academic excellence.

16 (b) Membership. The Study Committee shall be composed of the  
17 following members:

18 (1) the Secretary of Education or designee;

19 (2) the Commissioner of Taxes or designee;

20 (3) one member of the House Committee on Education and one member  
21 of House the Committee on Ways and Means, who shall be appointed by the

1 Speaker of the House, giving as much consideration as possible to balancing  
2 representation from across different political parties; and

3 (4) one member of the Senate Committee on Education and one member  
4 of the Senate Committee on Finance, who shall be appointed by the Committee  
5 on Committees giving as much consideration as possible to balancing  
6 representation from across different political parties.

7 (c) Powers and duties. The Study Committee shall study the potential cost  
8 containment efficacy and potential equity gains of changes to the education  
9 funding system to drive change, cost containment, operational efficiencies, and  
10 innovation in the public education system. The Study Committee's  
11 recommendations shall be intended to result in an affordable educational  
12 funding system designed to ensure substantially equal access to educational  
13 opportunities for all Vermont students, in accordance with *Brigham v. State*,  
14 166 Vt. 246 (1997), and lead to measurable, high student performance  
15 outcomes. The Study Committee's work under this subsection shall include an  
16 investigation into the factors that contribute to the current costs associated with  
17 Vermont's education system, with the Study Committee's final  
18 recommendations representing efforts to contain and reduce costs without  
19 sacrificing student outcomes. To achieve this objective, the Study Committee  
20 shall make recommendations, at a minimum, regarding the following:

1           (1) class and facility size requirements, including recommendations  
2           regarding staff-to-student ratios that are in alignment with national best  
3           practices and lead to schools staffed by a qualified workforce;

4           (2) whether, and if so, what, alternative funding models would create a  
5           more affordable, sustainable, and equitable education finance system in  
6           Vermont, including the consideration of a statutory, formal base amount of per  
7           pupil education spending and whether school districts should be allowed to  
8           spend above the base amount;

9           (3) whether encouraging or mandating further school district and facility  
10          consolidation should be encouraged or mandated, taking into account the  
11          unique geographical and socioeconomic needs of different communities, the  
12          role the current town tuition program plays in the provision of education and  
13          its impacts on education spending and equity, and a transition plan to achieve  
14          any recommendations pursuant to this subdivision;

15          (4) recommendations for consolidating supervisory unions and the  
16          provision of administrative services, including the provision of professional  
17          development, long-range planning, and business services, and a transition plan  
18          to achieve any such recommendations;

19          (5) adjustments to the excess spending threshold, including  
20          recommendations that target specific types of spending;

1           (6) the implementation of education spending caps on different services,  
2           including administrative and support services and categorical aid;

3           (7) what roles, functions, or decisions should be a function of local  
4           control and what roles, functions, or decisions should be a function of control  
5           at the State level, both within the education system as a whole as well as more  
6           specifically within the education finance system;

7           (8) how to strengthen the understanding and connection between school  
8           budget votes and property tax bills;

9           (9) adjustments to the property tax credit thresholds to better match need  
10          to the benefit; and

11          (10) a system for ongoing monitoring of the Education Fund and  
12          Vermont’s education finance system, to include consideration of a standing  
13          Education Fund advisory committee.

14          (d) Collaboration. The Study Committee shall seek input from and  
15          collaborate with key stakeholders, including, at a minimum, the following:

16               (1) the Vermont School Boards Association;

17               (2) the Vermont Principals’ Association;

18               (3) the Vermont Superintendents Association;

19               (4) the Vermont National Education Association;

20               (5) the Vermont Association of School Business Officials;

21               (6) the Vermont Independent Schools Association; and

1           (7) any other local, regional, or national organization with expertise in  
2           public school governance or financing, including other state or local  
3           governments.

4           (e) Assistance.

5           (1) The Study Committee shall have the administrative, technical, and  
6           legal assistance of the Office of Legislative Operations, Joint Fiscal Office, and  
7           Office of Legislative Counsel.

8           (2) The Joint Fiscal Office may retain the services of one or more  
9           independent third parties to provide facilitation and technical assistance to the  
10           Study Committee.

11           (f) Proposed legislation. On or before December 15, 2024, the Study  
12           Committee shall submit its findings and final recommendations in the form of  
13           proposed legislation to the General Assembly.

14           (g) Meetings.

15           (1) The Secretary of Education shall call the first meeting of the Study  
16           Committee to occur on or before July 15, 2024.

17           (2) The Study Committee shall select a chair from among its members at  
18           the first meeting.

19           (3) A majority of the membership shall constitute a quorum.

20           (4) The Study Committee shall cease to exist on December 31, 2024.



1        (a) Creation. There is hereby created the Commission on the Future of  
2        Public Education in Vermont. The right to education is fundamental for the  
3        success of Vermont’s children in a rapidly changing society and global  
4        marketplace as well as for the State’s own economic and social prosperity.  
5        The Commission shall study the provision of education in Vermont and make  
6        recommendations for a statewide vision for Vermont’s public education system  
7        to ensure that all students are afforded substantially equal educational  
8        opportunities in an efficient, sustainable, and stable education system. The  
9        Commission shall also make recommendations for the strategic policy changes  
10       necessary to make Vermont’s educational vision a reality for all Vermont  
11       students.

12       (b) Membership. The Commission shall be composed of the following  
13       members and, to the extent possible, the members shall represent the State’s  
14       geographic, gender, racial, and ethnic diversity:

15            (1) the Secretary of Education or designee;

16            (2) the Chair of the State Board of Education or designee;

17            (3) the Tax Commissioner or designee;

18            (4) one current member of the House of Representatives, appointed by  
19        the Speaker of the House;

20            (5) one current member of the Senate, appointed by the Committee on  
21        Committees;

1           (6) one representative from the Vermont School Boards Association  
2           (VSBA), appointed by the VSBA Executive Director;

3           (7) one representative from the Vermont Principals' Association (VPA),  
4           appointed by the VPA Executive Director;

5           (8) one superintendent, appointed by the Executive Director of the  
6           Vermont Superintendents Association;

7           (9) one representative from the Vermont National Education  
8           Association (VTNEA), appointed by the VTNEA Executive Director;

9           (10) one representative from the Vermont Association of School  
10          Business Officials (VASBO) with experience in school construction projects,  
11          appointed by the President of VASBO;

12          (11) the Chair of the Census-Based Funding Advisory Group, created  
13          under 2018 Acts and Resolves No. 173;

14          (12) the Executive Director of the Vermont Rural Education  
15          Collaborative; and

16          (13) one representative from the Vermont Independent Schools  
17          Association (VISA), appointed by the President of VISA.

18          (c) Steering group. On or before July 1, 2025, the Speaker of the House  
19          shall appoint two members of the Commission, the Committee on Committees  
20          shall appoint one member of the Commission, and the Governor shall appoint  
21          two members of the Commission to serve as members of a steering group. No



1 appointing authority shall appoint two members affiliated with the same  
2 organization. The steering group shall provide leadership to the Commission  
3 and shall work with a consultant or consultants to analyze the issues,  
4 challenges, and opportunities facing Vermont’s public education system, as  
5 well as develop and propose a work plan to formalize the process through  
6 which the Commission shall seek to achieve its final recommendations. The  
7 formal work plan shall be approved by a majority of the Commission  
8 members. The steering group may form one or more subcommittees of the  
9 Commission to address key topics in greater depth.

10 (d) Collaboration and information review.

11 (1) The Commission shall seek input from and collaborate with key  
12 stakeholders, as directed by the steering group. At a minimum, the  
13 Commission shall consult with:

14 (A) the Department of Mental Health;

15 (B) the Department of Labor;

16 (C) the President of the University of Vermont or designee;

17 (D) the Chancellor of the Vermont State Colleges Corporation or  
18 designee;

19 (E) a representative from the Prekindergarten Education

20 Implementation Committee;

21 (F) the Office of Racial Equity;

1           (G) a representative with expertise in the Community Schools model  
2           in Vermont; and

3           (H) the Vermont Youth Council.

4           (2) The Commission shall also review and take into consideration  
5           existing educational laws and policy, including legislative reports the  
6           Commission deems relevant to its work and, at a minimum, 2015 Acts and  
7           Resolves No. 46, 2018 Acts and Resolves No. 173, 2022 Acts and Resolves  
8           No. 127, and 2023 Acts and Resolves No. 76.

9           (e) Duties of the Commission. The Commission shall study Vermont’s  
10           public education system and make recommendations to ensure all students are  
11           afforded quality educational opportunities in an efficient, sustainable, and  
12           equitable education system that will enable students to achieve the highest  
13           academic outcomes. The result of the Commission’s work shall be a  
14           recommendation for a statewide vision for Vermont’s public education system,  
15           with recommendations for the policy changes necessary to make Vermont’s  
16           educational vision a reality. In creating and making its recommendations, the  
17           Commission shall engage in the following:

18           (1) Public engagement. The Commission shall conduct not fewer than  
19           14 public meetings to inform the work required under this section. At least one  
20           meeting of the Commission as a whole or a subcommittee of the Commission  
21           shall be held in each county. The Commission shall publish a draft of its final

1 recommendations on or before October 1, 2026, solicit public feedback, and  
2 incorporate such feedback into its final recommendations. When submitting its  
3 final recommendations to the General Assembly, the Commission shall include  
4 all public feedback received as an addendum to its final report. The public  
5 feedback process shall include:

6 (A) a minimum 30-day public comment period, during which time  
7 the Commission shall accept written comments from the public and  
8 stakeholders; and

9 (B) a public outreach plan that maximizes public engagement and  
10 includes notice of the availability of language assistance services when  
11 requested.

12 (2) Policy considerations. In developing its recommendations, the  
13 Commission shall consider and prioritize the following topics:

14 (A) Governance, resources, and administration. The Commission  
15 shall study and make recommendations regarding education governance at the  
16 State level, including the role of the Agency of Education in the provision of  
17 services and support for the education system. Recommendations under this  
18 subdivision (A) shall include, at a minimum, the following:

19 (i) whether changes need to be made to the structure of the  
20 Agency of Education, including whether it better serves the recommended  
21 education vision of the State as an agency or a department;

- 1                    (ii) what are the staffing needs of the Agency of Education;  
2                    (iii) whether changes need to be made to the composition, role,  
3                    and function of the State Board of Education to better serve the recommended  
4                    education vision of the State;  
5                    (iv) what roles, functions, or decisions should be a function of  
6                    local control and what roles, functions, or decisions should be a function of  
7                    control at the State level; and  
8                    (v) the effective integration of career and technical education in  
9                    the recommended education vision of the State.

10                    (B) Physical size and footprint of the education system. The  
11                    Commission shall study and make recommendations regarding how the unique  
12                    geographical and socioeconomic needs of different communities should factor  
13                    into the provision of education in Vermont, taking into account and building  
14                    upon the recommendations of the State Aid to School Construction Working  
15                    Group. Recommendations under this subdivision (B) shall include, at a  
16                    minimum, the following:

- 17                    (i) an analysis of the current number and location of school  
18                    buildings, school districts, and supervisory unions and whether additional  
19                    consolidation is needed to achieve Vermont’s vision for education, provided  
20                    that if there is a recommendation for any amount of consolidation, the  
21                    recommendation shall include a recommended implementation plan;

1                   (ii) an analysis of the capacity and ability to staff all public  
2 schools with a qualified workforce, driven by data on class-size  
3 recommendations;

4                   (iii) analysis of whether, and if so, how, collaboration with  
5 Vermont’s postsecondary schools may support the development and retention  
6 of a qualified educator workforce;

7                   (iv) an analysis of the current town tuition program and whether,  
8 and if so, what, changes are necessary to meet Vermont’s vision for education,  
9 including the legal and financial impact of funding independent schools and  
10 other private institutions, including consideration of the following:

11                   (I) the role designation, under 16 V.S.A. § 827, should play in  
12 the delivery of public education; and

13                   (II) the financial impact to the Education Fund of public dollars  
14 being used in schools located outside Vermont; and

15                   (v) an analysis of the current use of private therapeutic schools in  
16 the provision of special education services and whether, and if so, what,  
17 changes are necessary to meet Vermont’s special education needs, including  
18 the legal and financial impact of funding private therapeutic schools.

19                   (C) The role of public schools. The Commission shall study and  
20 make recommendations regarding the role public schools should play in both  
21 the provision of education and the social and emotional well-being of students.

1 Recommendations under this subdivision (C) shall include, at a minimum, the  
2 following:

3 (i) how public education in Vermont should be delivered;

4 (ii) whether Vermont’s vision for public education shall include  
5 the provision of wraparound supports and collocation of services;

6 (iii) whether, and if so, how, collaboration with Vermont’s  
7 postsecondary schools may support and strengthen the delivery of public  
8 education; and

9 (iv) what the consequences are for the Commission’s  
10 recommendations regarding the role of public schools and other service  
11 providers, including what the role of public schools means for staffing,  
12 funding, and any other affected system, with the goal of most efficiently  
13 utilizing State funds and services and maximizing federal funding.

14 (D) Education fund. The Commission shall explore the efficacy and  
15 potential equity gains of changes to the education funding system, including  
16 weighted educational opportunity payments as a method to fund public  
17 education. The Commission’s recommendations shall be intended to result in  
18 an education funding system designed to afford substantially equal access to a  
19 quality basic education for all Vermont students in accordance with *State v.*  
20 *Brigham*, 166 Vt. 246 (1997). Recommendations under this subdivision (D)  
21 shall include, at a minimum, the following:

1                   (i) allowable uses for the Education Fund that shall ensure  
2                   sustainable and equitable use of State funds;

3                   (ii) the method for setting tax rates to sustain allowable uses of the  
4                   Education Fund; and

5                   (iii) implementation details for any recommended changes to the  
6                   education funding system.

7                   (E) Additional considerations. The Commission may consider any  
8                   other topic, factor, or issue that it deems relevant to its work and  
9                   recommendations.

10                  (f) Reports and proposed legislation. The Commission shall prepare and  
11                  submit to the General Assembly the following:

12                   (1) a formal, written work plan, which shall include a communication  
13                   plan to maximize public engagement, on or before September 15, 2025;

14                   (2) a written report containing its preliminary findings and  
15                   recommendations, including short-term cost containment considerations for the  
16                   2026 legislative session, on or before December 15, 2025;

17                   (3) a written report containing its final findings and recommendations  
18                   for a statewide vision for Vermont’s public education system and the policy  
19                   changes necessary to make that educational vision a reality on or before  
20                   December 1, 2026; and

1           (4) proposed legislative language to advance any recommendations for  
2           the education funding system on or before December 15, 2026.

3           (g) Assistance. The Agency of Education shall contract with one or more  
4           independent consultants or facilitators to provide technical and legal assistance  
5           to the Commission for the work required under this section. For the purposes  
6           of scheduling meetings and providing administrative assistance, the  
7           Commission shall have the assistance of the Agency of Education. The  
8           Agency shall also provide the educational and financial data necessary to  
9           facilitate the work of the Commission. School districts shall comply with  
10           requests from the Agency to assist in data collections.

11           (h) Meetings.

12           (1) The Secretary of Education shall call the first meeting of the  
13           Commission to occur on or before July 15, 2025.

14           (2) The Speaker of the House and the President Pro Tempore shall  
15           jointly select a Commission chair.

16           (3) A majority of the membership shall constitute a quorum.

17           (4) Meetings shall be conducted in accordance with Vermont's Open  
18           Meeting Law pursuant to 1 V.S.A. chapter 5, subchapter 2.

19           (5) The Commission shall cease to exist on December 31, 2026.

20           (i) Compensation and reimbursement. Members of the Commission shall  
21           be entitled to per diem compensation and reimbursement of expenses as



1 permitted under 32 V.S.A. § 1010 for not more than 30 meetings, including  
2 subcommittee meetings. These payments shall be made from monies  
3 appropriated to the Agency of Education.

4 Fifth: In Sec. 25, effective dates, by striking out “(Commission on the  
5 Future of Public Education)” and inserting in lieu thereof “(Education Finance  
6 Study Committee)”