

February 22, 2023
Vermont Senate Education Committee
Testimony of Jeffrey Francis, Executive Director



Vermont
Superintendents
Association

S.56 - Human Services; Education; Prekindergarten; Child Care
Specifically the prospects for a PreKindergarten Study

Good afternoon. Thank you for the opportunity to testify. Given the time constraints I will speak very briefly.

It is fair to say that superintendents' views about S.56 and the prospects for serving four year old students in full-day programs in Vermont's public schools range from interested to enthusiastic. Those are logical perspectives given that schools exist to provide age appropriate education and care to students and superintendents understand the benefits of high quality early education.

That is not to say that implementing a statewide program would not present challenges, it would - but the public education system has been continually called upon to respond to various challenges and it has routinely risen to the occasion.

Before I learned that the topic for today had been narrowed to a PreK study, however that may ultimately be defined, I had arranged for testimony for three individuals knowledgeable on the topic of prekindergarten education and the associated challenges and opportunities. I will introduce those witnesses momentarily.

With respect to the notion of a study, I believe that I can say with confidence that VSA's perspective on a study is that it should be how - not whether - to implement statewide, full-day prek education services in public schools. I also think that you might consider keeping the requirement as an eventuality within the bill - even if you adjust the implementation date. Please keep those possibilities in mind as you listen to these educators share their experiences and perspectives with you. They are:

Sherry Sousa, Superintendent for the Windsor Central Supervisory Union

Maybeline Lopez, Director of Early Learning for the Winooski School District

Lynn Cota, Superintendent for the Franklin Northeast Supervisory Union

Thank you.