

**Vermont Senate Education Committee**  
**Written Testimony in Opposition to the Appointment of Zoie Saunders**

Divided governance requires a particularly difficult kind of collaboration. While it is the legislature's responsibility to vet and approve agency heads in a fair and efficient manner, it is in turn the executive's responsibility to present appointees who are qualified and approvable. It has been apparent from the moment of her announcement as the Governor's choice that Ms. Saunders' resume does not meet the minimum requirements to lead our state's public education system.

Now is not the time to take risks when it comes to education leadership in Vermont. Districts around the state have spent the past six months weathering a painful budget crisis without a fully functional Agency of Education as a partner and resource. I truly cannot think of another time in recent history where it has been more necessary to have a Secretary of Education with a substantial track record in public schools. As much as I can appreciate that the pressures of the moment make this appointment particularly urgent, that is not an acceptable rationale to appoint a candidate with an unprecedented lack of relevant experience.

The question at hand is not whether Ms. Saunders is competent, kind, or professional. It is not about whether she is from Vermont, Florida, Minnesota, Alabama, or any other state in the Union. It is whether an individual with less than a year of experience in public education is qualified to lead a state education agency that oversees public education. Having served on a hiring committee or two, as I am sure many of you have as well, I think the answer ought to be clear.

I urge the Senate to vote "no" to this appointment, and I hope that you are given the opportunity to approve a more appropriate candidate before another year passes.

Thank you,

Davis W. McGraw  
(he/him)  
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Board Clerk, Windsor Southeast Supervisory Union  
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