

1 H.887

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

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

10 * * * Education Finance Study Committee * * *

11 Sec. 1. EDUCATION FINANCE STUDY COMMITTEE

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

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

19 (1) the Secretary of Education or designee;

20 (2) the Commissioner of Taxes or designee;

1 (3) one member of the House Committee on Education and one member
2 of House the Committee on Ways and Means, who shall be appointed by the
3 Speaker of the House, giving as much consideration as possible to balancing
4 representation from across different political parties; and

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

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

1 sacrificing student outcomes. To achieve this objective, the Study Committee
2 shall make recommendations, at a minimum, regarding the following:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

18 (1) the Vermont School Boards Association;

19 (2) the Vermont Principals’ Association;

20 (3) the Vermont Superintendents Association;

21 (4) the Vermont National Education Association;

1 (5) the Vermont Association of School Business Officials;
2 (6) the Vermont Independent Schools Association; and
3 (7) any other local, regional, or national organization with expertise in
4 public school governance or financing, including other state or local
5 governments.

6 (e) Assistance.

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

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

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

16 (g) Meetings.

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

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

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

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)”