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H.148

Introduced by Representative Rachelson of Burlington

Referred to Committee on

Date:

Subject: Education; school districts; governance

Statement of purpose of bill as introduced: This bill proposes to require the Secretary of Education to develop a detailed proposal to move the State to a single statewide school district similar to the education governance model in Hawaii.

10 An act relating to creating a statewide school district

11 It is hereby enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Vermont:

12 Sec. 1. STATEWIDE SCHOOL DISTRICT; PROPOSAL; REPORT

13 (a) Findings.

14 (1) In fiscal year 2019, Vermont had the lowest student-per-school
15 district average in the United States, with an average of 315 students per
16 school district. Nationally, the average size of a school district was 3,382
17 students.

18 (2) The next lowest five states in this category had three times as many
19 students per school district as Vermont's 2019 average.

1 (3) In the 2023–2024 school year, Vermont had 52 supervisory unions,
2 118 school districts, and approximately 308 principals.

3 (4) The role of the voters and taxpayers is to approve school budgets and
4 payment of education taxes.

5 (5) In fiscal year 2023, the education payment for a total of 83,733
6 students was \$157,250,000.00. In fiscal year 2023, the income yield was
7 \$15,948.00 per equalized pupil.

8 (6) Between fiscal year 2004 and fiscal year 2023, total enrollment in
9 Vermont public schools in grades kindergarten through grade 12 decreased by
10 21.5 percent.

11 (7) Vermont has a unique education finance system with a statewide
12 funding formula coupled with local administration. The tax formula and
13 process are confusing and not easily understood. Currently, a district’s
14 homestead tax rates are determined by its per pupil education spending.

15 (8) Health care bargained on a statewide basis is more efficient than
16 local bargaining, and statewide bargaining on other terms of teachers’ contracts
17 would also be more efficient than local bargaining. Vermont lags in average
18 salary of teachers compared to the United States and New England.

19 (b) Proposal to transition to a single statewide school district. In order to
20 maximize the ability to provide equitable educational opportunities to the
21 State’s small, declining student population while also minimizing

1 administrative and overhead costs, the Secretary of Education shall develop a
2 proposal by which the State shall transition to a single statewide school district.
3 In developing the proposal, the Secretary shall consider the education
4 governance model in Hawaii, including the positive and negative effects that
5 transition to the model has had on educational opportunities, outcomes, and
6 budgets in Hawaii and on the provision and funding of special education
7 services in that state. The Secretary shall also investigate the need for waivers
8 or other federal actions necessary to transition Vermont to a statewide school
9 district.

10 (c) Report. On or before January 15, 2026, the Secretary shall present a
11 detailed proposal, including a timeline, to the House and Senate Committees
12 on Education to transition the State to a single statewide school district by
13 fiscal year 2028.

14 Sec. 2. EFFECTIVE DATE

15 This act shall take effect on July 1, 2025.