



Dear Chair Marcotte, Vice Chair Graning, and Committee Members:

The Vermont Superintendents Association offers this preliminary comment on the Representative Headrick **Amendment to H.205**. We respectfully urge the committee to reject the proposed amendment. At minimum, we ask that you allow superintendents—those charged with ensuring stable, high-quality learning environments—to share their perspective. Decisions of this magnitude should be made with full understanding of their consequences for students, schools, and communities.

Superintendents across Vermont have been active and willing partners in the effort to transform education in our state. That work is grounded in a shared goal: improving the quality of education for all students while responsibly managing declining enrollment and rising costs. Any policy change must be evaluated through that lens.

Teacher quality is the single most important school-based factor influencing student outcomes. When teachers leave their positions, the impact extends far beyond staffing logistics. Teacher turnover disrupts student learning, destabilizes school communities, and creates significant financial costs. National estimates suggest that the cost of replacing a single teacher can rise to \$25,000 (related to separation, recruitment, hiring, and training; Learning Policy Institute, 2024), but the true cost is borne by students. High turnover is associated with lower student achievement, particularly in schools already facing the greatest challenges. These schools already experience the highest rates of turnover.

For example, consider a young child preparing to enter kindergarten. They are excited to meet their teacher and begin their educational journey. Just days before school begins, their family learns that the teacher has left for another district. Despite best efforts, the district cannot secure a qualified replacement in time due to an already constrained labor market. The child's first experience with school becomes defined not by stability and connection, but by uncertainty and disruption. This is not an abstract scenario. It is a reality that districts would face with the implementation of this provision.

The proposed amendment risks increasing last-minute teacher mobility, further destabilizing schools and classrooms. Hiring outside of March or April makes it significantly harder to find qualified candidates, disrupts planning, and constrains the onboarding process for new educators. The impact would fall most heavily on rural and higher-need districts that already struggle to recruit and retain staff and are hamstrung by persistent funding inequities. Absent a broader conversation about education funding and meaningful support for recruitment and retention, this provision risks deepening the inequities our most impoverished communities already face.

Current statute already includes “just cause” provisions that allow for flexibility and compassion when educators face legitimate personal or professional circumstances. Superintendents and principals apply these provisions thoughtfully and humanely, balancing the needs of educators with their responsibility to ensure continuity of learning for students.

Our shared responsibility is to strengthen Vermont's education system, not unintentionally introduce policies that risk destabilizing the educational experience for the students who depend on us most.

Respectfully submitted,  
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