

February 10, 2026

Re: Vermont Superintendents Association and Vermont Principals' Association Request to Include Home Study Provisions in dr req 26-0753 – draft 2.1

Dear Chair and Members of the House Education Committee,

On behalf of the Vermont Superintendents Association (VSA) and Vermont Principals' Association, we appreciate the Committee's work on dr req 26-0753 – draft 2.1 (2026 House Miscellaneous Education Bill) and its focus on addressing chronic absenteeism.

Superintendents and principals across Vermont strongly support the focus of addressing chronic absenteeism and increasing engagement for all students and families. With this context, they are increasingly raising concerns about a growing gap in the State's ability to ensure attendance and engagement for students enrolled in home study programs, particularly students who are already vulnerable to disengagement. In practice, superintendents and principals are seeing situations in which home study is used not as an intentional instructional choice, but as a mechanism to avoid attendance requirements when students are struggling, leading to prolonged educational disengagement without clear pathways for intervention. These are typically students with the greatest need for intervention and support.

For background, statutory changes enacted in 2023 significantly reduced the Agency of Education's and school districts' ability to verify that students enrolled in home study programs are receiving the minimum course of study required by law. While these changes reduced administrative burden, they also removed practical tools to monitor meaningful educational engagement in these settings.

To ensure dr req 26-0753 – draft 2.1 meaningfully addresses chronic absenteeism across *all* compulsory attendance pathways, VSA respectfully requests inclusion of the following home study provisions, which represent a return to the pre-2023 regulations:

- **Require submission of annual assessment records upon re-enrollment in a home study program.** This creates a basic, objective signal of ongoing educational engagement and helps identify students who may otherwise be functionally absent from instruction.
- **Restore limited post-enrollment hearing authority for the Secretary of Education when credible concerns arise.** This authority should be narrowly defined, timely, and impartial, and used only when there is evidence of substantial noncompliance or educational neglect.
- **Clarify statutory triggers for State oversight**, such as failure to submit required assessments or credible information that the minimum course of study is not being provided. Clear triggers reduce subjectivity while ensuring students do not fall through the cracks.

- **Require annual reporting to the Legislature** on home study enrollment trends, compliance rates, and use of oversight tools, aligning home study data with the broader chronic absenteeism framework.

- **Grant limited pre-enrollment investigative authority to the Secretary of Education** if a truancy or DCF intake pattern is evident.

Superintendents and principals are deeply committed to respecting the choice to homeschool and supporting a range of educational pathways in partnership with the home district when desired. They are equally committed to ensuring that students who need connection, structure, and support are not unintentionally left without access to education or intervention. Including these provisions in dr req 26-0753 – draft 2.1 would help close a critical gap, reinforce shared accountability, and better align Vermont’s attendance laws with the realities superintendents and principals are facing in their communities.

Thank you for your consideration and for your continued leadership on student attendance and engagement. VSA would welcome the opportunity to support the Committee with additional context from superintendents and principals observing this trend.

Sincerely,

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Executive Director
Vermont Superintendents Association

Jay Nichols
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