

H.454

Representatives Olson of Starksboro and Yacovone of Morristown move that the report of the Committee on Education, as amended by the Committee on Ways and Means, be further amended as follows:

First: By adding a new section to be Sec. 8a to read as follows:

Sec. 8a. 16 V.S.A. § 726 is added to read:

§ 726. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CLOSURE

(a) Before closing an elementary school that operates grades prekindergarten through grade eight, or any subset of such grades, a school district shall:

(1) Provide notice of the district's intent to close the elementary school at least six months before the district's decision.

(2) Publish a report at least 90 days before the district's decision. The report shall include the district's conclusions, and the data, analysis, and other information supporting the conclusions concerning:

(A) the educational value to students of the school proposed to be closed;

(B) the long-term financial viability of the school proposed to be closed after considering all cost saving options;

(C) the ability of the school to meet regulatory requirements, including building maintenance and educational quality requirements;

1           (D) plans for student transportation;

2           (E) the disposition of elementary school buildings and other assets;

3       and

4           (F) the impact of closing the school on the community.

5           (3) Hold at least two hearings wherein the residents of the community  
6       served by the elementary school may offer comments, testimony, expert  
7       witnesses, and other relevant evidence.

8           (b) The district shall not close an elementary school unless the district  
9       determines, after notice and hearing, that:

10           (1) the elementary school proposed to be closed cannot offer an  
11       adequate and equitable educational opportunity for its students, and the school  
12       where the students will be moved will substantially improve student outcomes  
13       and offer an adequate and equitable educational opportunity for students;

14           (2) the elementary school proposed to be closed is not financially viable  
15       over the long term; and

16           (3) the elementary school closure is in the best interests of students and  
17       the community.

18           (c) The district's decision to close an elementary school may be appealed  
19       by five percent of the registered voters in the town or towns served by the  
20       school to the Superior Court.

1        (d) The provisions of this section shall not apply to a district whose  
2        applicable articles of agreement require an affirmative vote of the town in  
3        which the elementary school is located before the elementary school is closed.

4        Second: In Sec. 95 effective dates, by striking out subsection (b) in its  
5        entirety and inserting in lieu thereof a new subsection (b) to read as follows:

6        (b) The following sections shall take effect on July 1, 2025:

7            (1) Sec. 3 (scale; intent);

8            (2) Sec. 6 (SBE rules; report);

9            (3) Sec. 7 (school size; intent);

10          (4) Sec. 8 (school closure requiring designation);

11          (5) Sec. 8a (elementary school closure)

12          (6) Sec. 11 (16 V.S.A. § 3443);

13          (7) Sec. 12 (School Construction Advisory Board sunset);

14          (8) Sec. 18 (16 V.S.A. § 828);

15          (9) Sec. 19 (tuition transition);

16          (10) Sec. 20 (statewide cohesion; intent);

17          (11) Sec. 21 (AOE report; school calendar; graduation requirements);

18          (12) Sec. 22 (State-level governance; intent);

19          (13) Sec. 23 (16 V.S.A. § 161);

20          (14) Sec. 24 (SBE appointments transition);

21          (15) Sec. 25 (16 V.S.A. § 162);

- 1           (16) Sec. 26 (SBE rule review; appropriation);
- 2           (17) Sec. 31 (special education report);
- 3           (18) Sec. 32 (AOE special education strategic plan);
- 4           (19) Sec. 33 (AOE position); and
- 5           (20) Sec. 93 (PVR hearing officer pay).