



To: House Education Committee  
From: Krista Huling  
Date: March 26, 2025  
Re: Friends of Vermont Public Education

Good morning, I am Krista Huling: board member of the Friends of Vermont Public Education, a public school educator (teaching Social Studies at South Burlington High School), a former member and chair of the State Board of Education, and most importantly, a mother of a third-grader attending our local public school in Cambridge.

Thank you for inviting our group to present our thoughts and perspectives on education funding. Friends of Vermont Public Education (FVPE) is dedicated to protecting and strengthening Vermont's public schools. We advocate for clear accountability and transparency wherever public education dollars are spent. Any school receiving taxpayer funds should be held to the same standards and serve the public good, as required by Vermont's Constitution.

### **Teacher Licensure and Standards**

As a public school teacher, I must maintain a teacher's license and renew it every three years. The Vermont Standards Board for Professional Educators, a group that meets in open meetings, sets the standards I must meet to keep my license. My license is up for renewal in 2026, and in preparation, I must complete 90 hours of new learning.

- Take [three credits \(or 45 hours\) of new professional learning](#).
- At least one credit (or 15 hours) of new learning must apply directly to the [knowledge and performance standards](#) of the endorsement to be renewed.
- And the remaining two credits need to fall within the [Core Teaching and Leadership Standards](#) for Vermont Educators.

The initial licensure process is rigorous, involving praxis tests, classes, student teaching, portfolios, background checks, fingerprinting, ensuring taxes are up to date, and several hundred dollars in fees. However, not all schools in Vermont require their teachers to go through this process. Why does Vermont mandate that public schools hire licensed teachers, while private or independent schools receiving public funds are not required to follow the same process for all their teachers? Why do we want 90% of Vermont students to have teachers who meet these

standards, but not the other 10%? This discrepancy makes it challenging to have meaningful conversations about teacher quality in the state when schools receiving public funds don't follow the same rules or requirements for their employed teachers.

### **Independent School Approvals and Accountability**

I would like to bring your attention to a critical issue regarding independent school approvals and renewals. As a former chair of the State Board of Education, I am deeply concerned about the current state of oversight for these institutions.

The Agency of Education is responsible for reviewing independent school renewal requests, gathering materials, and providing recommendations to the SBE. However, despite the SBE's ultimate responsibility for approvals and renewals, it cannot fulfill its duties without the AOE's timely reviews. Unfortunately, despite repeated requests, the SBE has been unable to compel the AOE to complete these essential tasks.

The consequences of this delay are significant:

1. Currently, 59 schools are past their renewal deadline, with some due for renewal as far back as 2020.
2. Among these schools, 18 are Therapeutic Schools, which serve our most vulnerable students.
3. Schools remain eligible for public tuition during this period of delayed renewal, regardless of their current standards or practices.

The AOE has indicated plans to begin submitting renewals to the SBE this spring. However, they have stated they will not be reviewing Therapeutic schools. This is particularly concerning given that these schools serve our most at-risk students, often at considerable cost to school districts and the state, yet operate with little accountability.

This situation further emphasizes the need for consistent standards and oversight across all schools receiving public funds. The lack of timely renewals and proper accountability, especially for schools serving vulnerable populations, undermines our ability to ensure quality education and proper use of public resources for all Vermont students.

We urge the House Education Committee to address this issue and work towards a system that ensures consistent standards and proper accountability for all schools receiving public funds, including independent and therapeutic schools.

We invite you to join us and become a Friend of Vermont Public Education, helping to level the playing field so that all schools receiving public funds play by the same rules. Public dollars are precious; they come from hardworking Vermonters with the hope of doing the best for all of

Vermont's children. How these dollars are spent should come with transparency, oversight, and accountability.