

Thank you, Representatives, for this opportunity to speak about my education experience and help inform your decisions.

I think one of the most important things about going to public school in Vermont is the skills you learn about working with people who may not be very similar to you. Vermont obviously lacks diversity in many areas. However, going to a smaller school, you have to get along with people, because you can't only surround yourself with people who have the exact same values. I think that there is an important balance in class size. At a very small school, with five to fifteen or twenty kids in a grade, you don't get a break from other kids. At a really big school with hundreds of kids in your grade, you might not get a diverse friend group interest-wise, because, for example, if you were on the soccer team, you could just hang out with people on the soccer team.

I hope that in the future education in Vermont is pretty similar to now. I think that integrating more nature into academics would be positive. I hope that schools can continue to balance a variety of classes and be able to offer everything from art to Calculus. I think being able to take that range of classes cultivates better people, and I hope that as I go through school and in years after I graduate, students will be able to take advanced math and science classes and also participate in arts, as well as other subjects, such as history, english, and other programs that give students real world experience.

I also have some thoughts on H.454 more specifically. I understand the motivation for consolidating schools, and I think that it would make sense money-wise. However, I think it's important to consider students who go to schools that may be shut down. These students are in small communities, usually at least between fifteen and thirty minutes away from the larger school they would go to when their school gets shut down. This means the commute to school gets longer for these students, which makes it harder for them to participate in extracurriculars and gives them less time at home. I do understand that it's not sustainable to have ten person classes, and I don't think that the social situation from very small classes is ideal, but I think it is important to consider students who school consolidation may put significantly farther from their school.

I think that adopting a district-wide curriculum would be beneficial. In my school district, several elementary schools feed into a middle and high school. One of the schools in the district had a teacher that chose to teach students a more accelerated math curriculum. Because of that, students from that school were able to test into a higher math class in seventh grade. Students from other schools weren't informed that testing into accelerated math was a possibility, let alone given sufficient instruction to do so. Situations like this are frustrating, and by having a curriculum that every school had to follow, they would hopefully be less common.