

Willow Sharma
Personal Documents
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Senate Testimony

Hello members of the Senate education committee, my name is Willow Sharma. I am a student from Guilford, Vermont currently studying at the Brattleboro Union High School. I appreciate this opportunity to speak about Vermont's future educational plan. I am here to highlight my experiences through the System and how we, and many other students benefit in our smaller schools.

The Vermont educational system is special for its focus on community engagement through its small tightly knit schools. At Guilford Central Elementary School, I received tremendous personal attention and care with an average class size of 15. This school is the heart of our small community. When the pandemic hit, our community - both those with children in the school and those without - came together to build outdoor classrooms for our students. This connection between the school and town is incredibly special and something that is really unique to Vermont.

Today, I am pleased to be able to have access to all the opportunities offered through Brattleboro Union High School. In fact, it's the reason I came to speak today to support the community I really care about. Going from a small nurturing community at Guilford Central School to the larger district highschool gave me the confidence to take advantage of all the opportunities a larger school had to offer. At Brattleboro I have the opportunity to work in classes as small as 7 and some as large as 22 both giving a diversity of experiences.

Looking forward, I want to see the state make it their priority to protect the opportunities offered by smaller community schools. These give students a strong base at the start of their educational pathway. I know that raising enough funds for small schools is incredibly difficult and consolidation may ease the burden on taxpayers. I ask you to work on this bill with the idea in mind that small schools mean so much to our Vermont communities and provide enriching education to our students. I want the future generation of Vermont students to have the opportunities for a caring and inclusive education that will allow them to engage meaningfully in their local and larger communities.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration.