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**House Education Committee Testimony -
Lynn Cota, Superintendent Franklin Northeast Supervisory Union**

January 16, 2026

For the record, my name is Lynn Cota. I serve as the superintendent of the Franklin Northeast Supervisory Union, and as an Officer in the Vermont Superintendents Association. I serve nine schools in six towns in the Northwest corner of the state: Bakersfield, Berkshire, Enosburg, Montgomery, Richford, and Sheldon.

Of the nine schools I serve: two of my Pk-8 elementary schools were exempt from the testing requirement because of the age of the building. Six buildings have been tested. Three did not have elevated PCB levels.

Enosburg Elementary School tested below the Vermont threshold in all spaces but we were required to do ongoing testing in one room because test results were close to the threshold. We were required to undergo repeated testing cycles as a result. The Agency of Education funded testing for the first year. We would've been responsible for repeated testing, however, we abated asbestos flooring last summer and have now tested far enough under the Vermont PCB levels to be released from monitoring testing requirements.

Berkshire Elementary had elevated levels in one sample. As a result, two classrooms have been closed off for three school years. Students have been displaced into various spaces in the building. We needed an additional space this year and had to rent a modular classroom. Between the electrical work, handicap ramps and stairs, the modular delivery and rental we have incurred about \$55,000 in expenses so far, with ongoing rental costs at \$2,000 per month. We are currently developing a remediation plan. The Department of Environmental Conservation will need to sign off on our plan. We've been told there is no funding for our project and we expect the remediation will be in the six figures. We will be left figuring out how to pay for the remediation.

Sheldon Elementary School tested positive for PCB's within the envelope of their gym space. The cafeteria, gym, locker rooms, and boiler rooms were all above the allowable limits of PCB's. We are not as far down the road on remediation at Sheldon. We have been told there is no money to remediate the PCB's in Sheldon and know that we'll be required to pay for that work locally.

We find ourselves having to replace the boilers in Sheldon, in a space that we don't know the future of.

Enosburg Falls Middle and High School, our largest school, has not been tested for PCB's yet.

I think it is important to note that all of our impacted schools are under the Federal PCB action levels.

The impact of having to fund remediation projects without state funding is being felt throughout the state. Our two impacted schools are both in the Northern Mountain Valley Unified Union School District. Remediation will have a significant impact on our taxpayers and ultimately on our students. The two districts we serve are among the very lowest spending per weighted pupil in the state 105th and 111th out of 119 districts in Vermont.

As a state, we find ourselves in a conundrum. We are on a path of remediating schools for elevated PCB levels in a state that has to consider affordability and scale. We may be remediating buildings that will no longer serve as schools in the next five years. Although our woes in FNESU pale in comparison to systems like North Country, we could find ourselves in the very same place with our largest school - the one school that has not yet been tested.

If a compromise needs to be made in regard to H. 542, maybe testing could be tied to future state construction aid.

Thank you for your work on this legislation and on Act 73. I appreciate the opportunity to testify before you today.