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1 Introduced by Committee on Education

2 Date:

3 Subject: Education; school districts; cooperative education service areas; union

4 school districts; education finance; prekindergarten education

5 Statement of purpose of bill as introduced: This bill proposes to (1) rename
6 boards of cooperative education services to cooperative educational services
7 areas; (2) assign each supervisory union to a cooperative educational service
8 area; (3) require all school districts to participate in a study committee to study
9 the advisability of forming a unified union school district; (4) amend the
10 contingent effective dates in 2025 Acts and Resolves No. 73; and (5) require
11 JFO to hire a contractor to make recommendations regarding how to account
12 for the provision of prekindergarten education within Vermont’s education
13 finance system.

14 An act relating to next steps in transforming Vermont’s education system

15 It is hereby enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Vermont:

16 * * * Legislative Intent * * *

17 **Sec. 1. LEGISLATIVE INTENT**

18 (a) To ensure each student is provided substantially equal educational
19 opportunities that will prepare the student to thrive in a 21st-century world, it

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1 is the intent of the General Assembly to work strategically, intentionally, and
2 thoughtfully to ensure that each incremental change made to Vermont’s public
3 education system provides strength and support to its only constitutionally
4 required governmental service.

5 (b) The General Assembly recognizes that Vermont’s schools anchor local
6 economies and community identity, connecting young people to their homes
7 while supporting workforce development and long-term stability, and that
8 different regions of Vermont have different needs, challenges, and
9 opportunities. Further, it is the intent of the General Assembly to ensure that
10 local voice and community input retain an important role in Vermont’s
11 evolving education landscape.

12 * * * Cooperative Educational Service Areas * * *

13 Sec. 2. 16 V.S.A. chapter 10 is amended to read:

14 CHAPTER 10. ~~BOARDS OF COOPERATIVE EDUCATION SERVICES~~

15 EDUCATIONAL SERVICE AREAS

16 § 601. POLICY

17 It is the policy of the State to ~~allow and encourage supervisory unions to~~
18 ~~create boards of cooperative education services~~ educational service areas to
19 provide shared programs and services on a regional and statewide level.

20 ~~Formation of a board of cooperative education services shall be designed to~~
21 ~~build upon the geographically focused cooperative regions used by Vermont~~

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1 superintendents as of July 1, 2024; It is the intent of the General Assembly that
2 cooperative educational service areas are utilized by member supervisory
3 unions to maximize the impact of available dollars through collaborative
4 funding; reduce duplication of programs, personnel, and services; and
5 contribute to equalizing the equalization of educational opportunities for all
6 pupils.

7 § 602. DEFINITIONS

8 As used in this chapter:

9 (1) “Educator” means any:

10 (A) individual licensed under chapter 51 of this title, the majority of
11 whose employed time in a public school district, supervisory union, or ~~board of~~
12 cooperative ~~education services~~ educational service area is assigned to furnish
13 to students direct instructional or other educational services, as defined by rule
14 of the Standards Board, or who is otherwise subject to licensing as determined
15 by the Standards Board; or

16 * * *

17 (3) “Cooperative educational service area (CESA)” means an
18 association of supervisory unions created pursuant to this chapter to deliver
19 shared programs and services to complement the educational programs of
20 member supervisory unions in a cost-effective manner. A CESA shall be a

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1 body politic and corporate with the powers and duties afforded them under this
2 chapter.

3 § 603. CREATION OF BOARD OF COOPERATIVE EDUCATION

4 SERVICES EDUCATIONAL SERVICE AREAS;

5 ORGANIZATION; SECRETARY APPROVAL

6 (a) Establishment of ~~boards of cooperative education services~~ educational
7 service areas. ~~When the boards of two or more supervisory unions vote to~~
8 ~~explore the advisability of entering into a written agreement to provide shared~~
9 ~~programs and services, the interested boards shall meet and discuss the terms~~
10 ~~of any such agreement. At this meeting or a subsequent meeting, the~~
11 ~~participating boards may enter into a proposed agreement to form an~~
12 ~~association of supervisory unions to deliver shared programs and services to~~
13 ~~complement the educational programs of member supervisory unions in a cost-~~
14 ~~effective manner. An association formed pursuant to this chapter shall be~~
15 ~~known as a board of cooperative education services (BOCES) and shall be a~~
16 ~~body politic and corporate with the powers and duties afforded them under this~~
17 ~~chapter.~~ Supervisory unions are arranged into the following cooperative
18 educational service areas:

19 (1) The Champlain Valley North CESA is formed of the member
20 supervisory unions of:

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1 (A) Franklin Northeast Supervisory Union, which is composed of the
2 member school districts of the Enosburgh-Richford Unified Union School
3 District and the Northern Mountain Valley Unified Union School District;

4 (B) Franklin West Supervisory Union, which is composed of the
5 member school districts of the Fairfax School District, the Fletcher School
6 District, and the Georgia School District;

7 (C) Maple Run Unified Union Supervisory District;

8 (D) Milton Supervisory District; and

9 (E) Missisquoi Valley Supervisory District.

10 (2) The Chittenden Central CESA is formed of the member supervisory
11 unions of:

12 (A) Burlington Supervisory District;

13 (B) Colchester Supervisory District;

14 (C) Essex Westford Educational Community Unified Union
15 Supervisory District;

16 (D) Grand Isle Supervisory Union, which is composed of the member
17 school districts of the Alburgh School District, the Champlain Islands Unified
18 Union School District, and the South Hero School District;

19 (E) South Burlington Supervisory District; and

20 (F) Winooski Supervisory District.

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1 (3) The Champlain Valley South CESA is formed of the member
2 supervisory unions of:

3 (A) Addison Central Supervisory District;

4 (B) Addison Northwest Supervisory District;

5 (C) Champlain Valley Supervisory District;

6 (D) Lincoln Supervisory District;

7 (E) Mount Abraham Unified Supervisory District; and

8 (F) Mount Mansfield Unified Union Supervisory District.

9 (4) The Southwest CESA is formed of the member supervisory unions
10 of:

11 (A) Bennington Rutland Supervisory Union, which is composed of
12 the member school districts of the Mettawee School District, the Taconic and
13 Green Regional School District, and the Winhall School District;

14 (B) Greater Rutland County Supervisory Union, which is composed
15 of the member school districts of the Ira School District, the Quarry Valley
16 Unified Union School District, the Rutland Town School District, and the
17 Wells Spring Unified Union School District;

18 (C) Mill River Unified Union Supervisory District;

19 (D) Rutland City Supervisory District;

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1 (E) Rutland Northeast Supervisory Union, which is composed of the
2 member school districts of the Barstow Unified Union School District and the
3 Otter Valley Unified Union School District;

4 (F) Slate Valley Unified Union Supervisory District; and

5 (G) Southwest Vermont Supervisory Union, which is composed of
6 the member school districts of the Arlington School District, the Mount
7 Anthony Union High School District #14, the North Bennington Graded
8 School District, the Sandgate School District, and the Southwest Vermont
9 Union Elementary School District.

10 (5) The Vermont Learning Collaborative is formed of the member
11 supervisory unions of:

12 (A) Mountain View Supervisory Union, which is composed of the
13 member school districts of the Pittsfield School District and the Mountain
14 View School District;

15 (B) Springfield Supervisory District;

16 (C) Two Rivers Supervisory Union, which is composed of the
17 member school districts of the Green Mountain Unified School District;

18 (D) Windham Central Supervisory Union, which is composed of the
19 member school districts of the Marlboro School District, the River Valleys
20 Unified School District, the Stratton School District, the West River Modified
21 Union Education District, and the Windham School District;

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1 (E) Windham Northeast Supervisory Union, which is composed of
2 the member school districts of the Bellows Falls Union High School District,
3 the Rockingham School District, the Athens Grafton School District, and the
4 Westminster School District;

5 (F) Windham Southeast Supervisory Union, which is composed of
6 the member school districts of the Vernon Town School District and the
7 Windham Southeast School District;

8 (G) Windham Southwest Supervisory Union, which is composed of
9 the member school districts of the Vernon Town School District and the
10 Windham Southeast School District; and

11 (H) Windsor Southeast Supervisory Union, which is composed of the
12 member school districts of the Hartland School District, the Mount Ascutney
13 School District, and the Weathersfield School District.

14 (6) The Northeast CESA is formed of the member supervisory unions
15 of:

16 (A) Caledonia Central Supervisory Union, which is composed of the
17 member school districts of the Cabot School District, the Caledonia
18 Cooperative School District, the Danville School District, the Peacham School
19 District, and the Twinfield Union School District;

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1 (B) Essex North Supervisory Union, which is composed of the
2 member school districts of the Canaan School District, the Essex North
3 Supervisory Union, and the NEK Choice School District;

4 (C) Hartford Supervisory District;

5 (D) Kingdom East Supervisory District;

6 (E) North Country Supervisory Union, which is composed of the
7 member school districts of the Brighton School District, the Charleston School
8 District, the Coventry School District, the Derby School District, the Holland
9 School District, the Jay School District, the Lowell School District, the
10 Morgan School District, the Newport City School District, the Newport Town
11 School District, the North Country Union High School District, the North
12 Country Union Junior High School Board, the Troy School District, and the
13 Westfield School District;

14 (F) Orange East Supervisory Union, which is composed of the
15 member school districts of the Blue Mountain Union School District, the
16 Oxbow Unified Union School District, the Thetford Town School District, and
17 the Waits River Valley Union School District #36;

18 (G) Orleans Central Supervisory Union, which is formed of the
19 member school districts of the Lake Region Union Elementary-Middle School
20 District and the Lake Region Union High School District;

21 (H) Rivendell Interstate Supervisory District;

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1 (I) SAU 70; and

2 (J) St. Johnsbury Supervisory District.

3 (7) The Winooski Valley CESA is formed of the member supervisory
4 unions of:

5 (A) Barre Unified Union Supervisory District;

6 (B) Central Vermont Supervisory Union, which is composed of the
7 member school districts of the Echo Valley Community School District and the
8 Paine Mountain School District;

9 (C) Harwood Unified Union Supervisory District;

10 (D) Lamoille North Supervisory Union, which is composed of the
11 member school districts of the Cambridge School District and the Lamoille
12 North Modified Unified Union School District;

13 (E) Lamoille South Supervisory Union, which is composed of the
14 Member School Districts of the Elmore-Morristown Unified Union School
15 District and the Stowe School District;

16 (F) Montpelier Roxbury Supervisory District;

17 (G) Orange Southwest Unified Union Supervisory District;

18 (H) Orleans Southwest Supervisory Union, which is composed of the
19 member school districts of the Craftsbury School District, the Hazen Union
20 School District, the Mountain View Union Elementary School District, the
21 Stannard Town School District, and the Wolcott School District;

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- 1 (I) Washington Central Unified Union Supervisory District; and
2 (J) White River Valley Supervisory Union, which is composed of the
3 member school districts of the First Branch Unified School District, the
4 Granville-Hancock Unified District, the Rochester-Stockbridge Unified
5 District, the Sharon School District, the Strafford School District, and the
6 White River Unified District.

7 ~~(b) Articles of agreement Bylaws. Agreements to form a BOCES pursuant~~
8 ~~to this chapter shall take the form of articles of agreement and shall serve as~~
9 ~~the operating agreement for a BOCES. Agreements shall include a cost-~~
10 ~~benefit analysis outlining the projected financial savings or enhanced~~
11 ~~outcomes, or both, that the parties expect to realize through shared services or~~
12 ~~programs. No agreement or subsequent amendments shall take effect unless~~
13 ~~approved by the member supervisory union boards and the Secretary of~~
14 ~~Education. The Secretary shall approve articles of agreement if the Secretary~~
15 ~~finds that the formation of the proposed BOCES is in the best interests of the~~
16 ~~State, the students, and the member supervisory unions and aligns with the~~
17 ~~policy set forth in section 601 of this title, subject to the limitations of~~
18 ~~subsection (d) of this section. Each CESA shall establish bylaws to serve as~~
19 ~~the operating agreement of the CESA. At a minimum, the ~~articles of~~~~
20 ~~agreement bylaws shall state:~~

- 21 (1) the names of the participating supervisory unions;

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- 1 (2) the mission, purpose, and focus of the ~~BOCES~~ CESA;
- 2 (3) the programs or services to be offered by the ~~BOCES~~ CESA;
- 3 (4) the financial terms and conditions of membership of the ~~BOCES~~
- 4 CESA, including any applicable membership fee;
- 5 (5) the service fees for member supervisory unions and the service fees
- 6 for nonmember supervisory unions, as applicable;
- 7 (6) the detailed procedure for the preparation and adoption of an annual
- 8 budget with carryforward provisions;
- 9 (7) ~~the method of termination of the BOCES and the withdrawal of~~
- 10 ~~member supervisory unions, which shall include the apportionment of assets~~
- 11 ~~and liabilities; [Repealed.]~~
- 12 (8) the procedure for ~~admitting new members and for amending the~~
- 13 ~~articles of agreement~~ bylaws;
- 14 (9) the powers and duties of the board of directors of the ~~BOCES~~ CESA
- 15 to operate and manage the association, including:
- 16 (A) board meeting attendance requirements;
- 17 (B) consequences for failure to attend a board meeting;
- 18 (C) a conflict-of-interest policy; and
- 19 (D) a policy regarding board member salaries or stipends; and
- 20 (10) any other matter not incompatible with law that the member
- 21 supervisory unions consider necessary ~~to the formation of the BOCES~~.

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1 (c) Board of directors. A ~~BOCES~~ CESA shall be managed by a board of
2 directors, which shall be composed of one person appointed annually by each
3 member supervisory union board. Appointed persons shall be members of a
4 member supervisory union board or the superintendent or designee of the
5 member supervisory union. Each member of the ~~BOCES~~ CESA board of
6 directors shall be entitled to a vote. No member of the board of directors of a
7 ~~BOCES~~ CESA shall serve as a member of a board of directors or as an officer
8 or employee of any related for-profit or nonprofit organization. The board of
9 directors shall elect a chair from its members and provide for such other
10 officers as it may determine are necessary. The board of directors may also
11 establish subcommittees and create board policies and procedures as it may
12 determine are necessary. The board of directors shall meet not fewer than four
13 times annually. Each member of the board of directors shall provide updates
14 on the activities of the ~~BOCES~~ CESA on a quarterly basis to the member's
15 appointing supervisory union board at an open board meeting.

16 (d) ~~Number of BOCESs. There shall be not more than seven BOCESs~~
17 ~~statewide. Supervisory unions shall not be a member of more than one~~
18 ~~BOCES but may seek services as a nonmember from other BOCESs.~~

19 [Repealed.]

20 § 604. POWERS OF ~~BOARDS OF COOPERATIVE EDUCATION~~

21 SERVICES EDUCATIONAL SERVICE AREAS

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1 (a) In addition to any other powers granted by law, a ~~BOCES~~ CESA shall
2 have the power to provide educational programs, services, facilities, and
3 professional and other staff that, in its discretion, best serve the needs of its
4 members, including professional development, curriculum coordination and
5 development, and transportation. A ~~BOCES~~ CESA shall follow all applicable
6 State and federal laws in its provision of services, including Section 504 of the
7 Rehabilitation Act of 1973, 29 U.S.C. § 794, and the Individuals with
8 Disabilities Education Act, 20 U.S.C. §§ 1400–1482. At a minimum, a CESA
9 shall offer services in the following areas to its members:

10 (1) special education, including implementation and maintenance of
11 tiered systems of support and the provision of low incidence, high-cost
12 services;

13 (2) business and administrative services; and

14 (3) union school district creation consultation and facilitation.

15 (b) A ~~BOCES~~ may CESA shall employ an executive director who shall
16 serve under the general direction of the board and who shall be responsible for
17 the care and supervision of the ~~BOCES~~ CESA. The board shall annually
18 evaluate the executive director’s performance and effectiveness in
19 implementing the programs, policies, and goals of the ~~BOCES~~ CESA. The
20 executive director shall not serve as a board member, officer, or employee of
21 any related for-profit or nonprofit organization.

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1 (c) A ~~BOCES~~ CESA shall be a body politic and corporate and shall have
2 standing to sue and be sued to the same extent as a school district. A ~~BOCES~~
3 CESA may enter into contracts for the purchase of supplies, materials, and
4 services and for the purchase or leasing of land, buildings, and equipment as
5 considered necessary by the board of directors. Section 559 of this title shall
6 apply to the procurement of services or items with costs that exceed
7 \$40,000.00, as well as high-cost construction contracts, as defined by
8 subsection 559(b) of this title.

9 (d) The board of directors of a ~~BOCES~~ CESA may apply for State, federal,
10 or private grants, for which a ~~BOCES~~ CESA may be otherwise eligible, to
11 obtain funds necessary to carry out the purpose for which the ~~BOCES~~ CESA is
12 established. Nothing in this chapter is intended to create an entitlement to
13 federal funds distributed by the Agency of Education to local education
14 agencies.

15 § 605. FINANCING, BUDGETING, AND ACCOUNTING

16 (a) Education cooperative fund. A ~~BOCES~~ CESA shall establish and
17 manage a fund to be known as an education cooperative fund. All monies
18 contributed by the member school districts and all grants or gifts from the
19 federal government, State government, charitable foundations, private
20 corporations, or any other source shall be deposited into the fund.

21 (b) Treasurer.

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1 (1) A ~~BOCES~~ CESA shall appoint a treasurer who may be a treasurer of
2 a member school district and who shall be sworn in before entering the duties
3 of the office.

4 (2) The treasurer may, subject to the direction of the board of directors,
5 receive and disburse all money belonging to the board without further
6 appropriation.

7 (3) The treasurer shall keep financial records of cash receipts and
8 disbursements and shall make those records available to the board of directors
9 upon request.

10 (4) The board of directors shall ensure that its blanket bond covers a
11 newly appointed treasurer before the treasurer enters upon the duties of the
12 office. In lieu of a blanket bond, a ~~BOCES~~ CESA may choose to provide
13 suitable crime insurance coverage. The board of directors may pay reasonable
14 compensation to the treasurer for services rendered and shall evaluate the
15 treasurer's performance annually.

16 (c) Financial accounting system. A ~~BOCES~~ CESA shall use the uniform
17 chart of accounts and financial reporting requirements used by supervisory
18 unions as its financial accounting system.

19 (d) Audit. Annually, a ~~BOCES~~ CESA shall cause an independent audit to
20 be made of its financial statements consistent with generally accepted
21 governmental auditing standards and shall discuss and vote to accept the audit

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1 report at an open meeting of the board. The board shall transmit a copy of
2 each audit to the boards of its member supervisory unions.

3 (e) Annual statement. Annually, a ~~BOCES~~ CESA shall prepare financial
4 statements, including:

5 (1) a statement of net assets; and

6 (2) a statement of revenues, expenditures, and changes in net assets.

7 (f) Budget. ~~A The board of cooperative education services a~~ CESA shall
8 adopt a budget prior to the beginning of the fiscal year for which the budget is
9 adopted.

10 (g) Loans. A ~~BOCES~~ CESA may, upon approval of its members, negotiate
11 or contract with any person, corporation, association, or company for a loan
12 not to exceed the difference between the anticipated revenues for the current
13 fiscal year for the budget of the ~~BOCES~~ CESA and the amount credited to date
14 to said budget in order to pay current obligations. Such loan shall be liquidated
15 within six months thereafter from monies subsequently credited to said budget.
16 The total principal, interest, and fees to be paid on such loan shall not exceed
17 the total amount of the authorized budget for the same length of time.

18 § 606. ANNUAL REPORT; PUBLIC INFORMATION

19 (a) The board of a ~~BOCES~~ CESA shall prepare an annual report concerning
20 the affairs of the ~~BOCES~~ CESA and have it printed and distributed to the

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1 boards of the member supervisory unions. The annual report shall include, at a
2 minimum:

3 (1) information on the programs and services offered by the ~~BOCES~~
4 CESA, including information on the cost-effectiveness of such programs and
5 services and progress made towards achieving the objectives and purposes set
6 forth in the articles of agreement; and

7 (2) audited financial statements and the independent auditor’s report.

8 (b) A ~~BOCES~~ CESA shall maintain an internet website that makes the
9 following information available to the public at no cost:

10 (1) a list of the members of the board of directors of the ~~BOCES~~ CESA;

11 (2) copies of approved minutes of open meetings held by the board of
12 the ~~BOCES~~ CESA;

13 (3) a copy of the articles of agreement and any subsequent amendments;

14 and

15 (4) a copy of the annual report required under subsection (a) of this
16 section.

17 § 607. EMPLOYMENT

18 (a) A ~~BOCES~~ CESA shall be considered to be a public employer and may
19 employ personnel, including educators, to carry out the purposes and functions
20 of the board. Annually, the board of a ~~BOCES~~ CESA shall conduct an area

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1 survey of the salaries of the educators and staff employed by the ~~BOCES~~'s
2 CESA's member supervisory unions and school districts.

3 (b) No person shall be eligible for employment by a ~~BOCES~~ CESA as an
4 educator unless the person is appropriately licensed by the Standards Board for
5 Professional Educators pursuant to chapter 51 of this title.

6 (c) A person employed by a ~~BOCES~~ CESA as an educator shall be a
7 participant in the Vermont State Teachers' Retirement System pursuant to
8 chapter 55 of this title.

9 (d) A person who is employed by a ~~BOCES~~ CESA and who is not educator
10 shall be a participant in the Vermont Municipal Employees' Retirement
11 System pursuant to 24 V.S.A. chapter 125.

12 (e) Educators employed by a ~~BOCES~~ CESA shall be entitled to organize
13 pursuant to chapter 57 of this title.

14 (f) Employees employed by a ~~BOCES~~ CESA and who are not educators
15 shall be entitled to organize pursuant to 21 V.S.A. chapter 22.

16 (g) Educators and employees who are employed by a ~~BOCES~~ CESA shall
17 be provided health care benefits pursuant to chapter 61 of this title.

18 Sec. 3. REPEAL

19 2024 Acts and Resolves No. 168, Sec. 3 (transition; report) is repealed.

20 Sec. 4. 2024 Acts and Resolves No. 168, Sec. 4, as amended by 2025 Acts and
21 Resolves No. 72, Sec. 7, is further amended to read:

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1 Sec. 4. ~~BOCES~~ CESA GRANT PROGRAM; APPROPRIATION

2 (a) There is established the ~~Boards of Cooperative Education Services~~
3 Educational Service Area Start-up Grant Program, to be administered by the
4 Agency of Education, from funds appropriated for this purpose, to award
5 grants to ~~enable the formation of boards of cooperative education services~~
6 (~~BOCES~~) formed pursuant to ~~16 V.S.A. chapter 10 after July 1, 2024~~ the
7 CESAs created in 16 V.S.A. § 603(a) to assist with start-up costs. ~~Supervisory~~
8 ~~unions~~ CESAs shall be eligible for a single \$10,000.00 \$15,000.00 grant after
9 ~~two or more boards vote to explore the advisability of forming a board of~~
10 ~~cooperative education services pursuant to 16 V.S.A. § 603(a).~~ Grants may be
11 used for start-up and formation costs, including the development of ~~proposed~~
12 ~~articles of agreement~~ bylaws. ~~Grants shall be awarded to only one supervisory~~
13 ~~union within each group of supervisory unions exploring the formation of a~~
14 ~~BOCES.~~

15 (b) Notwithstanding any provision of 16 V.S.A. § 4025 to the contrary, the
16 sum of \$70,000.00 is appropriated from the Education Fund to the Agency of
17 Education in fiscal year 2025 to fund the ~~Boards of Cooperative Education~~
18 ~~Services~~ Educational Service Area Start-up Grant Program created in
19 subsection (a) of this section. Unexpended appropriations shall carry forward
20 into the subsequent fiscal year and remain available for use for this purpose.

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1 As used in this chapter:

2 (1) “Administrator” means an individual licensed under this chapter the
3 majority of whose employed time in a public school, school district,
4 supervisory union, or ~~board of cooperative education services~~ educational
5 service area is assigned to developing and managing school curriculum,
6 evaluating and disciplining personnel, or supervising and managing a public
7 school system or public school program.

8 * * *

9 (10) “Teacher” means an individual licensed under this chapter the
10 majority of whose employed time in a public school district, supervisory
11 union, or ~~board of cooperative education services~~ educational service area is
12 assigned to furnish to students direct instructional or other educational
13 services, as defined by rule of the Standards Board, or who is otherwise subject
14 to licensing as determined by the Standards Board.

15 Sec. 7. 16 V.S.A. § 1931(20) is amended to read:

16 (20) “Teacher” means any licensed teacher, principal, supervisor,
17 superintendent, or any professional licensed by the Vermont Standards Board
18 for Professional Educators who is regularly employed, or otherwise contracted
19 if following retirement, for the full normal working time for the teacher’s
20 position in a public day school or school district within the State, or in any
21 school or teacher-training institution located within the State, controlled by the

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1 State Board of Education, and supported wholly by the State; or in certain
2 public independent schools designated for such purposes by the Board in
3 accordance with section 1935 of this title; or who is regularly employed by a
4 ~~board of cooperative education services~~ educational service area created in
5 accordance with chapter 10 of this title. In all cases of doubt, the Board shall
6 determine whether any person is a teacher as defined in this chapter. It does
7 not mean a person who is teaching with an emergency license.

8 Sec. 8. 24 V.S.A. § 5051(10) is amended to read:

9 (10) “Employee” means the following persons employed on a regular
10 basis by a school district, by a supervisory union, or by a ~~board of cooperative~~
11 ~~education services~~ educational service area for not fewer than 1,040 hours in a
12 year and for not fewer than 30 hours a week for the school year, as defined in
13 16 V.S.A. § 1071, or for not fewer than 1,040 hours in a year and for not fewer
14 than 24 hours a week year-round; provided, however, that if a person who was
15 employed on a regular basis by a school district as either a special education or
16 transportation employee and who was transferred to and is working in a
17 supervisory union or a ~~board of cooperative education services~~ educational
18 service area in the same capacity pursuant to 16 V.S.A. § 261a(a)(6) or (8)(E)
19 and if that person is also employed on a regular basis by a school district
20 within the supervisory union, then the person is an “employee” if these criteria
21 are met by the combined hours worked for the supervisory union and school

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1 district. The term also means persons employed on a regular basis by a
2 municipality other than a school district for not fewer than 1,040 hours in a
3 year and for not fewer than 24 hours per week, including persons employed in
4 a library at least one-half of whose operating expenses are met by municipal
5 funding:

6 * * *

7 Sec. 9. 16 V.S.A. § 1981 is amended to read:

8 § 1981. DEFINITIONS

9 As used in this chapter unless the context requires otherwise:

10 * * *

11 (8) “School board negotiations council” means, for a supervisory
12 district, its school board, and, for school districts within a supervisory union or
13 ~~board of a cooperative education services~~ educational service area, the body
14 comprising representatives designated by each school board within the
15 supervisory union or ~~board of cooperative education services~~ supervisory
16 union board within each cooperative educational service area and by the
17 supervisory union board or board of ~~a cooperative education services~~
18 educational service area to engage in professional negotiations with a teachers’
19 or administrators’ organization.

20 (9) “Teachers’ organization negotiations council” or “administrators’
21 organization negotiations council” means the body comprising representatives

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1 designated by each teachers’ organization or administrators’ organization
2 within a supervisory district, supervisory union, or ~~board of~~ cooperative
3 ~~education services~~ educational service area to act as its representative for
4 professional negotiations.

5 Sec. 10. 21 V.S.A. § 1722 is amended to read:

6 § 1722. DEFINITIONS

7 As used in this chapter:

8 * * *

9 (18) “School board negotiations council” means, for a supervisory
10 district, its school board, and, for school districts within a supervisory union or
11 ~~board of a~~ cooperative ~~education services~~ educational service area, the body
12 comprising representatives designated by each school board within the
13 supervisory union or ~~board of cooperative education services~~ supervisory
14 union board within a cooperative educational service area and by the
15 supervisory union board or ~~board of cooperative education services~~ educational
16 service area to engage in collective bargaining with their school employees’
17 negotiations council.

18 (19) “School employees’ negotiations council” means the body
19 comprising representatives designated by each exclusive bargaining agent
20 within a supervisory district, supervisory union, or ~~board of~~ cooperative

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1 ~~education services~~ educational service area to engage in collective bargaining
2 with its school board negotiations council.

3 * * *

4 (21) “Municipal school employee” means an employee of a supervisory
5 union, school district, or ~~board of cooperative education services~~ educational
6 service area who is not otherwise subject to 16 V.S.A. chapter 57 (labor
7 relations for teachers and administrators) and who is not otherwise excluded
8 pursuant to subdivision (12) of this section.

9 * * *

10 Sec. 11. 16 V.S.A. § 2101 is amended to read:

11 § 2101. DEFINITIONS

12 As used in this chapter:

13 * * *

14 (3) “School employer” means a supervisory union or school district as
15 those terms are defined in section 11 of this title, or a ~~board of cooperative~~
16 ~~education services~~ educational service area formed pursuant to chapter 10 of
17 this title.

18 Sec. 12. CESA TRANSITION

19 (a) Within 30 days following the passage of this act, each member
20 supervisory union board of each CESA created under 16 V.S.A. § 603(a) shall

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1 appoint a person to serve on the board of directors of the applicable CESA
2 pursuant to 16 V.S.A. § 603(c).

3 (b) Within 45 days following the passage of this act, the superintendent of
4 the supervisory union with the highest aggregate average daily membership of
5 each CESA created under 16 V.S.A. § 603(a) shall call a meeting of the
6 directors of the CESA at which each CESA board shall elect a chair and other
7 necessary officers.

8 (c) The articles of agreement of the Vermont Learning Collaborative
9 (VTLC) in effect on June 30, 2026, shall serve as the operating agreement of
10 the VTLC unless and until amended.

11 * * * Union School District Exploration and Formation * * *

12 Sec. 13. UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT CREATION CONSULTATION AND
13 FACILITATION

14 (a) Facilitator. On or before October 1, 2026, the Vermont Learning
15 Collaborative (VTLC), a CESA formed pursuant to 16 V.S.A. chapter 10, shall
16 employ or contract for the services of seven union school district formation
17 facilitators (facilitators) who shall be responsible for organizing and facilitating
18 study committees to study the advisability of forming a unified union school
19 district. The VTLC shall also hire one lead facilitator who, in addition to
20 facilitating study committees as necessary, shall oversee the work of the seven
21 facilitators. A facilitator shall have knowledge of and experience working in

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1 Vermont’s public education system. The VTLC shall assign one facilitator to
2 each CESA membership region created pursuant to 16 V.S.A. § 603(a)(1)–(7).

3 (b) Study committees.

4 (1) On or before December 1, 2026:

5 (A) Each facilitator shall group school districts within the facilitator’s
6 assigned CESA region’s member supervisory unions together to form study
7 committees to study the advisability of forming a unified union school district.
8 The facilitator shall consult with school district boards prior to finalizing study
9 committee membership. Using the suggested school district groupings
10 contained in Sec. 13 as guidance, the facilitator shall group school districts
11 together according to the following criteria:

12 (i) total average daily membership of school districts forming a
13 study committee shall be a minimum of 2,000 students, as practical;

14 (ii) school districts shall be contiguous; and

15 (iii) school districts on the same study committee may be
16 members of different supervisory unions.

17 (B) Each study committee shall hold its first meeting.

18 (2) Notwithstanding any provision of law to the contrary, a school
19 district shall participate in the study committee it is assigned to by the
20 facilitator.

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1 (3) A study committee formed pursuant to this section shall adhere to
2 the processes and requirements of 16 V.S.A. chapter 11, subchapter 2.

3 (A) A study committee formed pursuant to this section may identify
4 necessary or advisable school districts, as those terms are used in 16 V.S.A.
5 § 708(b)(1) and (2), that are not members of the study committee or are not
6 members of the CESA, or both, and shall work with the applicable facilitator
7 or facilitators to adjust study committee membership as necessary.

8 (B) Notwithstanding 16 V.S.A. §§ 706(b) as it applies to study
9 committee budgets and 707(a) and (b), a study committee formed pursuant to
10 this section shall be funded through appropriations made by the General
11 Assembly for this purpose; provided, however, that if a study committee’s
12 needs exceed the appropriations provided, it may elect to increase its budget
13 according to the processes and procedures established in 16 V.S.A. chapter 11.

14 (C) In addition to the requirements of 16 V.S.A. chapter 11,
15 subchapter 2, a study committee shall also explore the advisability and
16 feasibility of a contemplated new unified union school district operating a
17 regional middle or high school, or both. A regional middle or high school
18 contemplated pursuant to this section shall offer resident students increased
19 educational opportunities and access to career technical education.

20 (D) If a study committee formed pursuant to this section determines
21 that it is advisable to propose formation of a new unified union school district,

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1 in addition to the report requirements in 16 V.S.A. § 708(c), the final report of
2 the study committee shall include an analysis of the following:

3 (i) the educational advantages and disadvantages likely to result
4 from the formation of the proposed unified union school district;

5 (ii) the financial advantages and disadvantages likely to result
6 from the formation of the proposed unified union school district;

7 (iii) the likely operational and financial viability and sustainability
8 of the proposed new unified union school district; and

9 (iv) any other advantages or disadvantages of formation of the
10 proposed unified union school district, including any advantages or
11 disadvantages to the students and taxpayers of the region and the State.

12 (E)(i) If a study committee formed pursuant to this section
13 determines that it is inadvisable to propose formation of a new unified union
14 school district, before the study committee members vote to dissolve the study
15 committee pursuant to 16 V.S.A. § 708(d), the study committee shall prepare a
16 report with the following details:

17 (I) the names of the school districts participating in the study
18 committee and whether the participation was formal or informal;

19 (II) an analysis of the strengths and challenges of the current
20 structures of all “necessary” and “advisable” school districts;

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1 (III) the reasons why formation of a new unified union school
2 district would be inadvisable, with specific references to any State law or rule
3 the study committee found to be an impediment to the formation of a unified
4 union school district, with a specific analysis of why such rule or law was an
5 impediment; and

6 (IV) if the decision of the study committee was not unanimous,
7 an analysis of the minority view of the committee outlining the ways in which
8 a unified union school district promotes the State policy set forth in section 701
9 of this chapter.

10 (ii) The study committee shall transmit its report to the school
11 board of each school district that participated in the study committee, the
12 Secretary, the State Board of Education, and the facilitator or facilitators
13 assisting the study committee.

14 (iii) Members of a study committee that determines it is
15 inadvisable to propose formation of a new unified union school district may
16 form a new study committee or committees and may pursue any union school
17 district formation option available under 16 V.S.A. chapter 11 after the study
18 committee members vote to dissolve the study committee formed pursuant to
19 this section.

20 (4) On or before December 1, 2027, each study committee shall
21 complete its final report and transmit it, along with proposed articles of

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1 agreement, as applicable, to the school board of each school district that the
2 report identifies as either “necessary” or “advisable” if the study committee
3 determined it was advisable to form a new unified union school district, or to
4 the school board of each school district participating on the study committee if
5 the study committee determined it was inadvisable to form a new unified union
6 school district.

7 (5) On or before February 1, 2028, a school board shall complete its
8 review and provide comments to the study committee pursuant to 16 V.S.A.
9 § 709(a) regarding the study committee’s report and proposed articles of
10 agreement.

11 (c) Secretary review. If a study committee determines that it is advisable to
12 propose formation of a new unified union school district, the study committee
13 is required to transmit the required report and proposed articles of agreement to
14 the Secretary pursuant to 16 V.S.A. § 709(b). If the Secretary fails to submit
15 the report and proposed articles of agreement, with the Secretary’s
16 recommendations, to the State Board within 60 days following receipt of the
17 report and proposed articles of agreement or on or before April 1, 2028,
18 whichever date shall occur first, the study committee shall transmit the report
19 and proposed articles of agreement directly to the State Board, which shall then
20 take action pursuant to 16 V.S.A. § 709(c) regardless of whether the Secretary

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1 submits a recommendation regarding the proposed unified union school
2 district.

3 (d) State Board findings. The State Board shall issue the findings required
4 pursuant to 16 V.S.A. § 709(c)(2) on or before June 1, 2028.

5 (e) Vote to form a unified union school district. If a study committee
6 formed pursuant to this section determines that it is advisable to propose
7 formation of a new unified union school district, the voters of each school
8 district that is identified as “necessary” or “advisable” shall vote whether to
9 form the proposed union school district, in accordance with 16 V.S.A. § 710,
10 on or before November 7, 2028.

11 (f) Study committee status report. On or before February 1, 2027, the
12 Agency of Education, in consultation with the facilitators, shall submit a
13 written report to the House Committees on Education and on Ways and Means
14 and the Senate Committees on Education and on Finance with information
15 regarding the membership and status of each study committee formed pursuant
16 to this section.

17 Sec. 14. GUIDANCE FOR STUDY COMMITTEE GROUPINGS

18 Facilitators shall use the school district groupings contained in subdivisions
19 (1)–(21) of this section as guidance when forming study committees pursuant
20 to Sec. 13 of this act. Facilitators may form study committees that differ from
21 the guidance contained in this section; provided, however, that a facilitator

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1 shall transmit the facilitator’s rationale for such choices to the lead facilitator
2 for inclusion in the report required pursuant to Sec. 15 of this act.

3 (1) Group one: Addison Central School District, Addison Northwest
4 School District, Lincoln School District, and Mount Abraham Unified School
5 District.

6 (2) Group two: Barstow Unified School District, Ira School District,
7 Otter Valley Unified Union School District, Quarry Valley Unified Union
8 School District, Rutland City School District, Rutland Town School District,
9 Slate Valley Unified Union School District, and Wells Spring Unified Union
10 School District.

11 (3) Group three: Mettawee School District, Mill River Unified Union
12 School District, Taconic and Green Regional School District, and Winhall
13 School District.

14 (4) Group four: Arlington School District, Mount Anthony Union High
15 School District #14, North Bennington Graded School District, Sandgate
16 School District, and Southwest Vermont Union Elementary School District.

17 (5) Group five: Halifax School District, Readsboro School District,
18 Searsburg School District, Somerset School District, Stamford School District,
19 Twin Valley Unified School District, Vernon Town School District, and
20 Windham Southeast School District.

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- 1 (6) Group six: Athens Grafton School District, Bellows Falls Union
2 High School District, Marlboro School District, River Valleys Unified School
3 District, Rockingham School District, Stratton School District, West River
4 Modified Union Education District, Westminster School District, and
5 Windham School District.
- 6 (7) Group seven: Green Mountain Unified School District, Ludlow-
7 Mount Holly Unified Union School District, and Springfield School District.
- 8 (8) Group eight: Hartford School District, Hartland School District,
9 Mount Ascutney School District, Mountain Views School District, Pittsfield
10 School District, and Weathersfield School District.
- 11 (9) Group nine: Echo Valley Community School District, First Branch
12 Unified School District, Granville-Hancock Unified District, Orange
13 Southwest Unified Union School District, Paine Mountain School District,
14 Rochester-Stockbridge Unified District, Sharon School District, Stafford
15 School District, and White River Unified District.
- 16 (10) Group 10: Blue Mountain Union School District, Cabot School
17 District, Caledonia Cooperative School District, Danville School District,
18 Peacham School District, Oxbow Unified Union School District, Thetford
19 Town School District, Twinfield Unified School District, and Waits River
20 Valley Union School District #36.

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1 (11) Group 11: Canaan School District, Essex North Supervisory
2 Union, Kingdom East Unified Union School District, NEK Choice School
3 District, and St. Johnsbury School District.

4 (12) Group 12: Brighton School District, Charleston School District,
5 Coventry School District, Craftsbury School District, Derby School District,
6 Hazen Union School District, Holland School District, Jay School District,
7 Lake Region Union Elementary-Middle School District, Lake Region Union
8 High School District, Lowell School District, Morgan School District,
9 Mountain View Union Elementary School District, Newport City School
10 District, Newport Town School District, North Country Union High School
11 District, North Country Union Junior High School Board, Stannard Town
12 School District, Troy School District, Westfield School District, and Wolcott
13 School District.

14 (13) Group 13: Mount Mansfield Unified Union School District.

15 (14) Group 14: Champlain Valley School District.

16 (15) Group 15: Essex Westford Educational Community Unified Union
17 School District.

18 (16) Group 16: Cambridge School District, Elmore-Morristown Unified
19 Union School District, Lamoille North Modified Unified Union School
20 District, and Stowe School District.

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1 (17) Group 17: Enosburgh-Richford Unified Union School District,
2 Northern Mountain Valley Unified Union School District, and Missisquoi
3 Valley School District.

4 (18) Group 18: Fairfax School District, Fletcher School District,
5 Georgia School District, and Maple Run Unified School District.

6 (19) Group 19: Burlington School District, South Burlington School
7 District, and Winooski ID.

8 (20) Group 20: Alburgh School District, Champlain Islands Unified
9 Union School District, Colchester School District, Milton Town School
10 District, and South Hero School District.

11 (21) Group 21: Barre Unified Union School District, Harwood Unified
12 Union School District, Twinfield Unified School District, Montpelier Roxbury
13 School District, and Washington Central Unified Union School District.

14 Sec. 15. STUDY COMMITTEE RESULTS AND ANALYSIS;

15 FACILITATOR REPORT

16 On or before January 1, 2029, the lead facilitator employed or contracted by
17 the Vermont Learning Collaborative (VTLC) shall submit a written report to
18 the House and Senate Committees on Education with the results of each study
19 committee overseen by each facilitator employed or contracted by the VTLC
20 and information regarding whether, and if so, how, the following issues
21 impacted or influenced the final outcome for each study committee overseen

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1 by the facilitator, along with recommendations for legislative action needed to
2 remove identified barriers to the formation of new union school districts:

3 (1) differences in staffing costs and the costs associated with moving
4 from several different collectively bargained agreements to one collectively
5 bargained agreement for applicable staff in the new union school district;

6 (2) differences in operating structures;

7 (3) geographic and topographic barriers;

8 (4) enrollment patterns and projections; and

9 (5) any other factor the facilitator found to have influenced the final
10 decision of a study committee.

11 Sec. 16. SUPERVISORY UNION AND CESA BOUNDARIES; AGENCY
12 OF EDUCATION REPORT

13 On or before January 1, 2029, the Agency of Education, in consultation
14 with the study committees formed pursuant to this act and the State Board of
15 Education, shall submit a written report to the House and Senate Committees
16 on Education with recommendations for supervisory union boundary
17 adjustments and CESA boundary adjustments that take into account the new
18 union school districts formed or proposed to be formed pursuant to this act.

19 Sec. 17. STUDY COMMITTEE REIMBURSEMENT GRANTS; CESA
20 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GRANTS; REPORTS;
21 APPROPRIATIONS

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1 (a) Study committee reimbursement grant; appropriation.

2 (1) The Agency of Education shall pay up to \$10,000.00 to a study
3 committee formed pursuant to Sec. 13 of this act to reimburse participating
4 school districts for legal and other services necessary for the analysis and
5 report required pursuant to 16 V.S.A. § 708(c) and Sec. 13(b)(3)(D) or (E) of
6 this act, as applicable. The study committee shall forward invoices to the
7 Agency on a quarterly basis. The Agency shall reimburse one-half of the total
8 amount reflected in each set of invoices upon receipt and the remaining one-
9 half upon completion of the final report required pursuant to Sec. 13(b)(3)(D)
10 or (E) of this act, as applicable; provided, however, that no payment shall
11 cause the total amount of funds paid to a study committee to exceed the
12 \$10,000.00 limit.

13 (2) The sum of \$210,000.00 is appropriated from the General Fund to
14 the Agency of Education in fiscal year 2027 for the purpose of awarding study
15 committee reimbursement grants to the study committees formed pursuant to
16 Sec. 13 of this act in accordance with subdivision (1) of this subsection.

17 (b) Facilitator appropriation; reports.

18 (1) The sum of \$442,000.00 is appropriated from the General Fund to
19 the Vermont Learning Collaborative in fiscal year 2027 for the purpose of
20 hiring or contracting for seven facilitators and one lead facilitator pursuant to
21 Sec. 13(a) of this act as well as for administrative costs associated with

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1 contracting for the facilitators. VTLC may use up to \$32,000.00 of the funds
2 appropriated pursuant to this subsection for administrative costs.

3 (2) Beginning on October 1, 2026, and every three months thereafter for
4 the next year, the Vermont Learning Collaborative shall submit written
5 quarterly reports to the General Assembly with a detailed accounting of the
6 funds expended pursuant to this subsection.

7 (c) CESA executive director grant; appropriation.

8 (1) From funds appropriated to the Agency of Education for this
9 purpose, the Agency shall award a grant in the amount of \$50,000.00 to each
10 CESA created in 16 V.S.A. § 603(a) to be used by the CESA to hire an
11 executive director; provided, however, that the Vermont Learning
12 Collaborative shall not be eligible for a grant under this subsection.

13 (2) The sum of \$300,000.00 is appropriated from the General Fund to
14 the Agency of Education in fiscal year 2027 for the purpose of awarding CESA
15 executive director grants in accordance with subdivision (1) of this subsection.

16 * * * 2025 Acts and Resolves No. 73 * * *

17 Sec. 18. 2025 Acts and Resolves No. 73, Sec. 70 is amended to read:

18 Sec. 70. EFFECTIVE DATES

19 * * *

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1 (e) Sec. 61a shall take effect on January 1, 2027, provided that the General
2 Assembly has enacted new school district boundaries between the enactment
3 of this act and January 1, 2027.

4 (f)(1) The following sections enumerated in subdivision (2) of this
5 subsection (f) shall take effect on July 1, 2028 2030, provided that the new
6 school districts contemplated by this act have assumed responsibility for the
7 education of all resident students and that the expert tasked with developing a
8 cost-factor foundation formula has provided to the General Assembly the
9 report pursuant to Sec. 45a to provide the General Assembly an opportunity to
10 enact legislation in consideration of the report following conditions have been
11 met:

12 (A) the clerk of each school district voting on the proposal to form a
13 unified union school district on or before November 7, 2028, pursuant to 2026
14 Acts and Resolves No. X, Sec. 13, has certified the results of that vote to the
15 Secretary of Education pursuant to 16 V.S.A. § 713(a);

16 (B) the expert tasked with developing a cost-factor foundation
17 formula has provided to the General Assembly the report required pursuant to
18 Sec. 45a;

19 (C) the Joint Fiscal Office has provided the legislature with an
20 analysis that shows the combined approved fiscal 2027 education spending for
21 the school districts consolidated into each new school district compared with

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1 the estimated educational opportunity payment under the revised proposed
2 foundation formula for each district; and

3 (D) legislation has been enacted that addresses:

4 (i) suitable geographic measures for determining sparsity within
5 the foundation formula;

6 (ii) whether it costs more to educate a secondary student than an
7 elementary student in Vermont and, if so, an appropriate weight to capture the
8 cost differential of educating secondary students;

9 (iii) how to account for the provision of career and technical
10 education within Vermont’s foundation formula;

11 (iv) how to account for regional differences in operating costs,
12 including those driven by regional differences in cost of living and legacy
13 collective bargaining agreements within the foundation formula;

14 (v) how to fund special education services; school construction,
15 renovation, and repayment of school district debt; transportation; and universal
16 pre-kindergarten; and

17 (vi) any other aspect of the foundation formula the General
18 Assembly deems prudent to address.

19 ~~(1)~~(2)(A) In Sec. 27, 16 V.S.A. § 823(a) and (d);

20 ~~(2)~~(B) Sec. 28 (tuition repeals);

21 ~~(3)~~(C) Secs. 34–43 (transition to cost-factor foundation formula);

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- 1 (4)(D) Sec. 45b (educational opportunity payment transition);
- 2 (5)(E) Secs. 46, 47, 49, and 50 (statewide education tax; supplemental
- 3 district spending tax);
- 4 (6)(F) Sec. 46a (supplemental district spending tax; cap; transition);
- 5 (7)(G) Sec. 48a (tax rate transition);
- 6 (8)(H) Secs. 51, 52, and 54–56 (property tax credit repeal; creation of
- 7 homestead exemption);
- 8 (9)(I) Sec. 57 (Education Fund Advisory Committee; review of
- 9 foundation formula); and
- 10 (10)(J) Secs. 60 and 61 (property tax classifications).
- 11 (g) In Sec. 27, 16 V.S.A. § 823(b) and (c) shall take effect on July 1, 2028
- 12 ~~July 1, 2030, provided that the new school districts contemplated by this act~~
- 13 ~~have assumed responsibility for the education of all resident students clerk of~~
- 14 ~~each school district voting on the proposal to form a unified union school~~
- 15 ~~district on or before November 7, 2028, pursuant to 2026 Acts and Resolves~~
- 16 ~~No. X, Sec. 13, has certified the results of that vote to the Secretary of~~
- 17 ~~Education pursuant to 16 V.S.A. § 713(a)~~ and that the cost-factor foundation
- 18 formula report required pursuant to Sec. 45a contains evidence that it costs
- 19 more to educate students in grades nine through 12 but the General Assembly
- 20 has failed to enact legislation to add a secondary student weight.

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1 (h) Sec. 62 (regional assessment districts) shall take effect on January 1,
2 2029.

3 * * * Prekindergarten Education * * *

4 Sec. 19. PREKINDERGARTEN EDUCATION; FINDINGS

5 The General Assembly finds that:

6 (1) despite being colloquially known as the “universal prekindergarten
7 program,” not all children three and four years of age in the State have equal
8 access to a prequalified prekindergarten provider;

9 (2) Vermont ranks second in the country with regard to access to
10 prekindergarten education by children who are four years of age, with 76
11 percent of eligible four-year-old children receiving prekindergarten education,
12 and that Vermont is one of two states in which more than 70 percent of
13 children who are four years of age receive prekindergarten services;

14 (3) only 11 percent of eligible children are enrolled in prekindergarten
15 services in Essex County;

16 (4) there is considerable geographic disparity in the State with regard to
17 the number of prekindergarten slots available, and as a result, 95 percent of
18 eligible children in Windsor and Windham Counties and 93 percent of eligible
19 children in Chittenden County have access to a prequalified prekindergarten
20 provider as compared to 55 percent in Franklin County and 61 percent in
21 Grand Isle County; and

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1 (5) while a substantial portion of states provide a full school day of four
2 or more hours of prekindergarten education daily, less than five percent of
3 Vermont’s prequalified prekindergarten providers provide a full day of four or
4 more hours of prekindergarten education.

5 Sec. 20. LEGISLATIVE INTENT

6 It is the intent of the General Assembly to:

7 (1) ensure that prekindergarten education is included as an integral part
8 of Vermont’s education system, as the right to education is fundamental for the
9 success of Vermont’s children in all grades, prekindergarten through grade 12;

10 (2) determine a locus of responsibility to ensure there is access to
11 prekindergarten education within all school districts;

12 (3) provide access to licensed teachers in the classroom of both
13 prequalified public and private providers, including access to support and
14 provisional status; and

15 (4) equalize financial resources for all prequalified providers of
16 prekindergarten education.

17 Sec. 21. JOINT FISCAL OFFICE; PREKINDERGARTEN; REPORT;

18 APPROPRIATION

19 (a)(1) The Joint Fiscal Office shall contract with a contractor with expertise
20 in Vermont’s education funding system to make recommendations regarding
21 how to account for the provision of prekindergarten education within

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1 Vermont’s education finance system, including the consideration of use of
2 categorical aid or the inclusion of prekindergarten education within a
3 foundation formula through the use of a prekindergarten weight. The
4 contractor’s recommendations shall be designed to provide funding for
5 prekindergarten education that:

6 (A) supports achieving access for every prekindergarten child, as that
7 term is defined in 16 V.S.A. § 829, with equal payments and equal educational
8 standards for public and private providers;

9 (B) ensures the cost of prekindergarten education is included in the
10 full cost of education;

11 (C) increases access and participation in areas of the State where
12 access or participation is limited; and

13 (D) continues to support a mixed delivery system.

14 (2) The recommendations shall, to the extent possible, align with the
15 recommendations of the report required pursuant to 2025 Acts and Resolves
16 No. 73, Sec. 45a. The contractor shall submit a written report with the
17 contractor’s recommendations to the House Committees on Education, on
18 Human Services, and on Ways and Means and the Senate Committees on
19 Education, on Finance, and on Health and Welfare on or before January 15,
20 2027.

