

# District Merger Costs:

*Testimony to the House Education Committee*

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On behalf of the Vermont Superintendents Association

March 19, 2026

# The Core Issue: What Drives Merger Costs?

Salaries & Benefits

~80%

of district budgets

Salary Equalization

\$5.5M

annual additional cost  
to level up teacher salaries  
in Lamoille County alone

Transition Overhead

\$1M+

per new district for  
transitional administration  
over two years

# Teacher Salary Gaps: Lamoille County

Supervisory Union	Avg. Teacher Salary (FY26)	Gap from Highest	# Teachers	Est. Cost to Level Up
Lamoille South	\$80,275	<i>Benchmark</i>	181	—
Lamoille North	\$67,524	<b>-\$12,751</b>	227	<b>\$2,894,477</b>
Orleans Southwest	\$60,000	<b>-\$20,275</b>	129	<b>\$2,615,475</b>
<b>TOTAL ADDITIONAL ANNUAL COST</b>				<b>\$5,509,952</b>

Note: Support staff salaries face similar gaps — e.g., avg. hourly rate is \$28.85 (Lamoille North) vs. \$24.93 (Lamoille South).

# The Two-Year Transition Is Not Cost-Neutral



## What transition work requires:

- Dedicated transitional team: superintendent, finance director, special ed director, curriculum director, legal support
- Merging & bargaining multiple collective bargaining agreements simultaneously
- Aligning curriculum, student information systems, and financial systems
- Meeting federal & state compliance: Title grants, CIPs, special education mandates

# A Targeted Alternative: CESAs

*Cooperative Education Service Agencies — Recommended by the Redistricting Task Force*

## What CESAs Target

### Special Education Costs

29 students outplaced in Green Mountain Tech region alone — at costs exceeding \$200K/student annually

### Transportation

Shared regional coordination reduces per-district overhead

## Why CESAs Make Sense Now

- Directly targets the fastest-growing cost drivers
- Delivers specialized services closer to home, more quickly
- Avoids the front-loaded costs of full consolidation
- Extraordinary sped costs = nearly half of sped spending growth (AOE)
- Potential to address chronic absenteeism and the alignment of regional social service agencies

**Questions?**