

Good Afternoon, House Education Committee,

My name is Jeremiah Watson; I am a former page, proud Essex County resident, and strong supporter of school choice. Today, as a first-hand witness, I wish to inform you of how education could be improved for young Vermonters to make our system more equitable from my perspective

School choice will make our education system fairest for Vermonters. We can choose the schools we desire to attend. School choice will allow students to move to larger schools, providing every young Vermonter with the best education possible while staying in line with the Governor's new plan to cut spending. This policy was why my family moved to Vermont when I was 3. Moms and dads being involved in their kids' education is what most Vermonters want and is the solution to many of Vermont's problems. The common counterargument to school choice is that independent schools won't meet state standards. If the independent school is terrible and does not meet the standards, then nobody will attend that school anyway, so that issue is null and void. To better serve Vermonters, Please stand up to special interests, so we can have a fair education system through a statewide voucher program.

To make our education system more fair, parents need more involvement in their kid's education. This way, parents can better comprehend what they spend their tax dollars on. A sustainable voucher program will help involve parents more as they determine the school to which they send their child, which allows parents to vet the school better. Roughly 71% of Americans support school choice, including a large share of Vermonters, according to the AFC, so please support the parents who want the best for their kid's future by supporting statewide school choice.

In all Vermont Schools, our students should learn basic life skills, and a bit about our nations history. Students should be required to know how to perform the heimlick maneuver, and perform CPR to graduate from middle school. To graduate from high school, students should be required to pass a naturalization test—we should know about the country we are about to serve. Our high school education system should also teach that it is okay to have a technical career— we need them in our corner of Vermont.

By passing universal school lunches, Vermont Legislature inadvertently created a system where the poor subsidize lunches for wealthier students. We should go back to our old system, where the rich pay their fair share, and the middle class and poor get free or reduced lunch. Vermont kids need to eat healthier foods to learn the value of high-quality nutrition when they grow older, starting from a very young age. The obesity rate in the United States has been on the rise for a long time, and our state should lead the nation in halting further developments of this unhealthy lifestyle. Processed foods should be removed almost entirely from the lunch diet so that students don't learn that foods that taste sweeter are better for them. Students should also have required

physical activity, such as a weekly or bi-weekly 2-mile run, and should have Physical education classes from a young age. Students should also have a physical fitness program beginning as a freshman in highschool– should they maintain in good health through out their highschool and college careers, their college books and lunches would be discounted by the state if they go to college in Vermont. This would incentivize people to stay in Vermont, and the program would be paid for in the long run, by reduced costs on health care. Our education system should teach our students to be healthier individuals so that they can be more productive and enjoy a happier, longer life.

Our education system should treat women and girls fairly. I am an original feminist, and I won't apologize for that!

To protect Title 9, we should ensure that biological males are not allowed in women's sports to protect the safety and competitiveness of women's athletics. In addition, Biological males should not be allowed in women's bathrooms and private spaces.

We should teach students that we are all blessed to live in the greatest nation in the world and that all students can be successful if they work hard. We should teach at a young age to be kind to one another and to treat everyone with respect. I believe in Jean Rousseau's theory, which states that humans are inherently good beings and that these beliefs are solidified by early education. By teaching students these values early on, we can eliminate the need for anti-bias curriculums later in education. Anti-bias curriculums often make students see each other in different categories, which defeats their initial intent. These types of curriculums are not helpful and don't foster inclusion. In my own experience, students were instructed at my middleschool at a Gay-Straight Alliance, that it was more masculine for a man to sleep with a male than a female. This club was held 4 days a week, at lunchtime, so any middle schooler who didn't attend, was left to eat lunch alone. I also heard in this classroom that I was oppressed simply for existing in the skin I was born with– being black. Instead, we should have community-building activities; for example, my middle school had fall field trips, where we would participate in activities as a class. This is how we foster inclusion.

We need to teach our students to strive to be the best again so that we can once again compete on a global stage. Coupled with Vermont's mountains, inherent beauty, school choice freedom, slashing business strangling bureaucracy, and cutting taxes, Vermont would be the nation's best attraction site. Let's do this and make Vermont's future sustainable.

Thank you.