

To the House Ways and Means Committee:

I am writing in support of H.886 in my capacity as Chair of the Champlain Valley School District (CVSD) Board of Directors. CVSD is the largest district in Vermont and, as a district located in Chittenden County, we operate in one of the highest cost-of-living regions in the state.

As currently structured, our understanding is that the proposed foundation formula does not account for regional differences in labor costs. We believe this is a significant oversight. Districts in Chittenden County are more likely to operate at scale, with class sizes already at or above Act 73 minimums, and are far less able to consolidate schools or combine classrooms to reduce expenses.

Within CVSD, our forecasted average K-8 class size is 20 students. This includes 17 students in grades K-3 and 22 students in grades 4-8. After two consecutive years of substantial reductions totaling nearly \$9 million and over 82 FTE, there is little remaining flexibility. Any shortfall resulting from an inadequate funding formula will directly impact programming and undermine the very goals Act 73 is intended to advance.

While affordability is a statewide concern, the cost of competing for and retaining educators in Chittenden County is demonstrably higher. Using 2024–2025 Agency of Education data, we analyzed teacher compensation, which represents nearly half of all FTE expenditures:

	Statewide	Chittenden County	CVSD
Teachers only	7,881	1,931	382
Total Salary	566,463,756	161,202,310	33,683,556
Average	\$71,871	\$83,443	\$88,167
% Difference vs State		16%	23%

The cumulative difference in teacher salary costs in Chittenden County compared to the state average totals approximately \$23 million. This gap is not reflected in the foundation formula. In districts that have already consolidated and operate efficiently at scale, this structural underfunding can only be addressed through reductions to student programming.

A core purpose of Act 73 is to expand and strengthen educational opportunities for students. A funding formula that does not adequately reflect regional cost realities will penalize districts that have already consolidated, operate at scale, and manage resources responsibly. That result would contradict the intent of the legislation and diminish opportunities for students.

We urge you to ensure that the foundation formula incorporates regional labor cost adjustments so that districts are funded based on the true cost of delivering high-quality education. Without that correction, the burden will fall directly on student programming and educational opportunity.

Meghan Metzler

Chair, Champlain Valley School District