



To: Vermont House Ways and Means Committee
From: Vermont Council of Special Education Administrators (VCSEA)
Date: March 31, 2026
Re: Maintenance of Effort (MOE)

For over 44 years, the Vermont Council of Special Education Administrators (VCSEA) has been a cornerstone of educational leadership in Vermont. We are dedicated to supporting all Special Education Administrators and other special education leaders, working in close collaboration with Superintendents, Principals, the Vermont Agency of Education, family support organizations, and numerous other state organizations.

At the core of our mission, the VCSEA strives to provide leadership, support, collegiality, and mentorship to all who teach and lead in education and special education across Vermont. We are honored to contribute to a state that deeply invests in the future of all its children.

MOE is a federal mandate that requires districts to sustain special education spending at a level equal to or greater than the prior year. Failure to maintain this effort can result in the loss of federal funding. MOE failures could jeopardize access to critical Individuals with Disabilities Education (IDEA) grant dollars, which are an essential component of Vermont's special education system. Ensuring fiscal stability for special education is therefore not only a matter of compliance, but also one of equity, as Vermont transitions to a foundation formula under Act 73. Students must have consistent access to the services they are entitled to, and districts must be able to meet their obligations without risking the loss of federal support.

Solidify the Funding Floor Beyond FY27

While we appreciate the addition of the inflator given Act 173's drop of the inflator this coming school year, a one-year fix creates a "funding cliff" that prevents long-term planning. We strongly recommend codifying the **MOE plus inflator** model as a permanent solution extending through **FY28 and FY29**. Our districts cannot wait for annual legislative sessions to know if they can afford mandated services. Consistency. By making this standard permanent, you provide the fiscal certainty necessary to navigate the Act 73 transition without compromising student services.

Act 73 Safeguard the Future Funding for Special Education

Regardless of which funding model the Agency of Education ultimately proposes, be it census, weighting, or reimbursement, the **funding floor must be non-negotiable**. We ask the legislature to insert clear, statutory language this session establishing that **any future funding design for special education must meet or exceed the MOE plus inflator standard**. This is not a preference for one model over another; it is a demand for a "safety rail" that ensures no future design inadvertently defunds our most vulnerable learners and does not create competition for the foundation formula base amount.

Our most critical request is this: At the point of implementing the foundation formula, special education must be **100% funded as a separate allocation**. Districts must never be forced to "rob" their base formula allocations, funds intended for the general education of all students, to meet federal and state special education MOE requirements.

We are asking for a legislative guarantee that special education funding will be **stable, inflated for cost of living, and additive to the base**. We must ensure that a "foundation formula" provides a floor for every student, rather than a ceiling that forces districts to choose between general education and mandated special education services.

We urge you to adopt this language to provide the stability our students need.