

## Subject: Vermont Education Reform

Wed 3/18/2026 2:23 PM

Dear Senate Education Committee Members,

My name is Elizabeth Wemyss and I am a constituent who lives at 1475 Route 102 Guildhall, VT. I am writing as a parent of two school-aged daughters who benefit immensely from the School Choice program offered in the Northeast Kingdom as our little village no longer has its own public education system.

I was very glad to learn today that the House Education Committee is no longer considering their most recent version of the districting map and have gone back to have further discussions. I know that you have important work you are doing on your side as well. My hope is that by hearing our personal story you can understand the direct impact of school choice and how important it is to our entire rural region in the Northeast Kingdom to be able to maintain choice in existing choice towns.

3 years ago, we made the decision to leave our home in Connecticut to move specifically to Guildhall, VT to be able to build a life restoring an abandoned, neglected, dilapidated 250 year old farm. We chose Guildhall for several reasons but, at the top of the list was because of School Choice and the ability for our daughters to go to an independent school that best fits their learning styles and needs. Despite the independent school being a 40-minute commute (one way) and without a bussing system, we valued (& continue to value) it so much that the final closing on our farm was contingent on our daughters' acceptance into the school of choice.

When we moved, we brought with us our young, energized family, higher education degrees, backgrounds, life experiences, resiliency, creativity, business sense, economics, and most importantly, our strong desire to live a vibrant life and raise our children in the NEK.

Since moving to Guildhall, we have breathed life back into a farm that would have otherwise faded into the "once was" history of much of rural Vermont. We developed a successful Highland Cattle Breeding Stock program and have a fold of 26 Highland Cattle, we've invested heavily into regenerative farming practices (rotational grazing, diversifying livestock, cover crops, agroforestry, and meeting our energy needs with 100% solar energy). I run a well-frequented small scale heirloom veggie/ cut flower farmstand with what I am able to grow on our farm as well as opened a sourdough microbakery that operates under the Vermont Cottage Bakery

Exemption. Through my microbakery, I have a continuously sold out Sourdough CSA. Additionally, I have partnered with two of our local food banks and have donated pounds and pounds of fresh veggies and well-over 140 freshly baked sourdough loaves so that our neighbors in need can have access to high-quality food received with dignity and respect.

Additionally, we are expanding and hiring for 2 farm positions this season, further growing our farm and our ability to support our community. Our top candidates are both women who want to learn, grow, and develop their skill set in regenerative farming, the Vermont economy, and local food systems.

I am probably a little biased, but I think that our story and the work our family has done is exactly what many see as a draw to move to the Northeast Kingdom. There is so much potential and possibility but only if there is a regeneration of populus, energy, economic development/ drive, community support, and, most importantly, access to high-quality educational opportunities.

It is very clear to us that if School Choice was to be eliminated and Vermont to be shifted into Supervisory Districts, we would be forced into a very difficult position with very limiting choices:

- Pay full tuition for both of our daughters to continue to go to their independent school (if the school could even keep its doors open as 60% of the population there is School Choice enrollment). Coming up with that tuition would be incredibly difficult for us.
- Send our children to a farther-away, assigned public school where they don't know anyone and it may not be a good fit for them.
- Have to sell our farm, close a budding and promising business, and relocate our young family to another place within Vermont where our daughters would be guaranteed access to a high-quality public education that fits their learning styles and needs.

As you continue your important work and decision making, I urge you to please take into strong consideration the unique needs of the rural Northeast Kingdom, the Supervisory Unions that already work well, and maintaining School Choice access in towns that currently have them.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Wemyss