

Subject: Concerns Regarding Proposed Draft District Map and Its Impact on Grand Isle County Families

Dear Senators,

I am writing as a concerned constituent to express serious concerns about the current draft district map and its unintended consequences for families in Grand Isle County, particularly those in South Hero and the Town of Grand Isle.

While I understand that the intent of the draft map is to promote equity and fairness, in practice, it does not serve families equitably. Treating the islands as a single, uniform geographic unit fails to reflect the lived reality of island communities. Geographically, we are spread far apart, and transportation routes, commute patterns, and daily logistics are not the same for all towns. Equity cannot be achieved by overlooking these differences.

For decades, children from South Hero (Folsom Education and Community Center) and Grand Isle (Grand Isle School) have attended schools in Colchester, Essex, and South Burlington. This pattern exists for clear and practical reasons. These schools align with family work locations, childcare arrangements, extracurricular activities, and daily transportation routes. Families have consistently and intentionally chosen these districts because they fit how their lives function. Conversely, the school or schools selected under the current draft map are not ones families historically choose, because they do not align geographically, logistically, or economically with family needs.

Logistically, Chittenden County schools are significantly closer and more accessible for South Hero and Grand Isle families than schools in Franklin County. For many families, rerouting children away from South Burlington, Colchester or Essex would require substantially longer commutes, more complex transportation arrangements, and increased daily disruption. This is not a theoretical concern. It affects morning drop-offs, after-school care, extracurricular participation, and family stability.

It is also critical to acknowledge the workforce reality of southern Grand Isle County. A majority of families in South Hero and Grand Isle work in Chittenden County. Forcing school placements that pull families in the opposite direction creates a real and measurable hardship, both logistical and economic. Longer and misaligned commutes increase missed work, lost wages, childcare complications, and transportation costs. This disproportionately impacts working families and undermines the very equity the map is intended to support.

Beyond the immediate impact on families, this proposed change poses a serious risk to the long-term economic health of the region. If implemented as drafted, it will significantly reduce the desirability of living in southern Grand Isle County for working families. Increased daily hardship tied to school placement will directly

affect property values, as families consider school access and commute feasibility when choosing where to live. A decline in desirability and home values would harm not only individual homeowners but also the broader local economy and municipal tax base. These outcomes are foreseeable and avoidable, and they run counter to the goal of building strong, sustainable communities.

True equality does not mean uniform treatment. It means thoughtful accommodation of real circumstances. A map that ignores geography, employment patterns, transportation routes, long-standing family decisions, and economic impact risks destabilizing households and placing unnecessary burdens on children and communities.

I respectfully urge you to revise the draft map to ensure that families in South Hero and Grand Isle retain the ability to send their children to South Burlington, Colchester, or Essex schools. Preserving this option reflects how families have made informed choices for years and ensures that policy decisions support, rather than disrupt, children's education, family stability, and regional economic health.

Thank you for your time, your service, and your willingness to listen to the voices of the families who will be directly affected by these decisions. I hope you will reconsider this portion of the draft map with these realities in mind.

Sincerely,  
Jaime Short  
Grand Isle County Resident