

Subject: Concerned Parent & Grand Isle Resident

Dear Committee Member,

I am writing as a resident and parent to share serious concerns about the current Act 73 draft district map and the negative impact it would have on families in southern Grand Isle County, particularly in South Hero and the Town of Grand Isle.

While I understand the intent of Act 73 is to promote equity and fairness, the proposed map does not achieve those goals in practice. Treating Grand Isle County as a single, uniform unit overlooks the very real geographic, economic, and community differences that exist between its towns. Equity cannot be achieved by ignoring how families actually live, work, and access education.

For generations, students from South Hero and Grand Isle have attended schools in Colchester, Essex, and South Burlington. This is not incidental or historical inertia — it is a deliberate and practical choice that reflects where families work, where siblings and extended family have attended school, where students participate in sports and extracurricular activities, and how daily transportation realistically functions. These patterns are deeply established and continue because they work.

By contrast, the schools proposed under the current draft map are not ones families in southern Grand Isle County have historically chosen, largely because they are significantly less accessible. Schools in Chittenden County are far closer and align with existing commute routes. Redirecting students to Franklin County would require longer, more complex daily travel, increased transportation burdens, and major disruptions to before- and after-school care, extracurricular participation, and family stability.

Most families in South Hero and Grand Isle work in Chittenden County, not Franklin County. Forcing school placements that pull children and families in the opposite direction of employment creates real economic hardship, including missed work, increased childcare costs, and higher transportation expenses. These impacts fall hardest on working families and directly undermine the equity goals Act 73 is meant to advance.

It is also important to recognize that different parts of Grand Isle County have different long-standing connections. Alburgh and Isle La Motte have historically attended schools in Franklin County, particularly Missisquoi Valley Union, and that arrangement makes geographic and community sense for them. South Hero and Grand Isle do not share that same connection. Other counties in Vermont are split across multiple districts to reflect these realities, and Grand Isle County should be treated with the same consideration.

Beyond the immediate effects on families, the proposed map poses a serious risk to the long-term economic health of southern Grand Isle County. Limiting access to the schools families rely on will make the area less attractive to working families,

negatively affecting property values, community stability, and the municipal tax base. These consequences are foreseeable and avoidable.

Nothing about this proposal involves school closures or the loss of educational options — yet families feel as though they are being displaced from the school communities they have long been part of, without meaningful consultation. That has understandably caused anxiety and frustration in a small county where community connections matter deeply.

I respectfully urge you to revise the draft map to ensure that families in South Hero and the Town of Grand Isle retain the ability to send their children to South Burlington, Colchester, or Essex schools. Preserving this option reflects long-standing family decisions, supports students' educational success, and promotes true equity rooted in real-world circumstances.

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

Sincerely,
Mallory Surprenant
Grand Isle Resident