



To: Senate Education Committee

From: Flor Diaz Smith, President, VSBA Board of Directors
Meghan Metzler, Vice President, VSBA Board of Directors

Re: VSBA Response to Agency of Education Redistricting Maps Testimony

Date: January 23, 2026

Thank you for the opportunity to provide Vermont School Boards Association's (VSBA) response to the Agency of Education's January 15 testimony on redistricting maps, particularly the hybrid redistricting scenario.

VSBA's Criteria for a Successful Plan

In evaluating any redistricting proposal, we apply the criteria outlined in our position paper, [Responsible Implementation of Act 73](#). According to the criteria, any statewide reform plan must:

1. Be based on a unified vision and mission for Vermont's education system, PreK through Grade 12;
2. Improve student outcomes, as supported by evidence and data that show the correlation between redistricting and enhanced educational experiences and results for all students;
3. Ensure equitable access for all students to public educational opportunities, including academic programs, co-curricular activities, and support services, particularly by identifying and addressing inequities that currently exist in both access and outcomes;
4. Promote a shared sense of responsibility to educate students with a full range of needs and strengths, recognizing that some populations may require additional resources;

5. Prioritize equitable access to both high-quality career and technical education and flexible pathways for all students, equipping them with the knowledge and skills needed for successful careers of their choosing;
6. Increase resources to support the maintenance, repair, renovation and construction of modern school facilities, recognizing that safe, healthy and well-designed learning environments are essential to better student outcomes;
7. Create a more efficient and cost-effective system of school districts that addresses some of the critical expenses that are rising at exponential rates, including employee health benefits, mental health supports, facilities needs, and special education services;
8. Recommend parameters for district size by enrollment that are large enough to allow efficiency at scale but small enough to maintain a strong sense of community and personalized attention to every student, supported by research;
9. Recognize and address significant variation across different regions of the state, including student demographics, community resources, and other geographic considerations;
10. Emerge from a collaborative, inclusive, transparent decision-making process that incorporates meaningful engagement and input from residents, families, educators, district leaders, and school boards, who will be most affected by any changes;
11. Be supported by detailed cost analyses of current district finances and projected savings through redistricting, including the impact on staffing levels and class sizes; and
12. Minimize disruption and ensure effective implementation through the development of a comprehensive transition plan and timeline, with adequate funding to support all expenses associated with redistricting.

VSBA's Response to the AOE Hybrid Scenario Based on the Criteria

1. Vision & Mission Alignment

A successful statewide plan must be based on a unified vision and mission for Vermont's education system, PreK through Grade 12. The vision and mission should be the starting point, not an afterthought.

The hybrid scenario blends a VSBA region scenario with a regional high school scenario. The VSBA regions were developed for our non-profit membership association's governance and organizational purposes, not as education governance regions. Each VSBA region elects two representatives to serve on the VSBA's Board of Directors for alternating two year terms. These regional representatives hold at least one regional meeting per year in addition to serving on the VSBA Board of Directors.

It is unclear how the hybrid model articulates a clear and understandable *unified vision and mission* for the entire state PreK through Grade 12.

2. Evidence of Improved Student Outcomes

VSBA continues to urge that any proposed scenario be grounded in clear and robust data demonstrating how student outcomes will improve directly due to the new structure, not simply through assumptions of scale. The hybrid scenario does not include evidence linking governance/configuration to measurable outcomes.

3. Equity of Educational Opportunity

A central tenet of our criteria is ensuring equitable access to opportunities for all students. It is essential that any scenario demonstrates how students across the state will have equitable access to academic programs, enrichment activities, and career & technical education. The hybrid model does not address this critical criterion and current disparities.

4. Shared Responsibility & Resources

VSBA supports models that promote shared responsibility for students with a full range of needs. It is unclear how the hybrid scenario promotes such shared responsibility.

5. Equitable Access to CTE and Flexible Pathways

VSBA supports models that prioritize equitable access to both high-quality career and technical education and flexible pathways for all students, equipping them with the knowledge and skills needed for successful careers of their choosing. It is unclear to us whether the regional high schools in the hybrid scenario would be comprehensive high schools offering equitable access to high quality career and technical education. Because it is missing that information and so many other details, the hybrid scenario does not create the conditions to meet this criterion.

6. Facility Investment & Long-Term Sustainability

The hybrid scenario should include analysis of facility needs and how districts

within the configuration can responsibly finance maintenance, renovation, or construction. Without clear parameters for facility funding that ensure equity across communities, this criterion remains unmet.

7. Efficiency and Cost Effectiveness

VSBA's criteria require credible, detail-oriented analyses showing that any proposed scenario will yield *net savings or cost stabilization* without harming programming or increasing burdens on taxpayers. The model must directly address cost drivers such as health benefits (see [VSBA issues brief](#)) and facilities. The hybrid scenario does not meet this criterion.

8. Efficiency and Community

We recommend parameters for district size that are large enough to allow efficiency at scale and small enough to maintain a strong sense of community and personalized attention to every student, supported by research.

This [Vermont Superintendents Association Policy Brief](#) cites research on the topic of district size and recommends district sizes of 2,000-4,000 students based on the research. While VSBA supports this recommendation in concept, we acknowledge that the most rural areas of the state may require district sizes of less than 2,000 students in order to have the geographic size of the new district(s) at a scale that maintains a strong sense of community.

In contrast, the average district size in the hybrid scenario is 6,413 and the maximum size is 9,122. The hybrid scenario district sizes are not supported by research and are too large to maintain a strong sense of community. The hybrid scenario does not meet this criterion.

9. Variation Across Regions of the State

There is significant variation across different regions of the state, including student demographics, community resources, and geographic considerations. The hybrid scenario does not take these variations into account.

10. Collaborative Decision-making Process

A successful plan will emerge from a collaborative, inclusive, transparent decision-making process that incorporates meaningful engagement and input from residents, families, students, educators, district leaders, and school boards. The process utilized by the Redistricting Task Force and the Commission on the Future of Public Education met this criterion in several ways. In contrast, the Agency of Education developed the hybrid scenario without meaningful engagement and input.

11. Transparency & Data Availability

The hybrid scenario does not include comprehensive data such as projected financial impacts, student demographic implications, transportation logistics, and staff effects. Therefore, it does not meet this criterion.

12. Transition Planning

A successful plan must include a *comprehensive transition plan* with realistic timelines, funding mechanisms, and supports for districts and staff. Without these elements clearly laid out, the hybrid scenario of moving from 119 to 13 districts sets Vermont's education system on a path that is not feasible.

Closing & Recommendations

The AOE's hybrid scenario does not meet VSBA's criteria for responsible implementation of Act 73. While we acknowledge it would be difficult for any initial scenario to meet all of the criteria, it should at least create the conditions for meeting the criteria. The hybrid scenario's 13 districts with a minimum district size of 4,044, an average district size of 6,413, and a maximum district size of 9,122 are too large to maintain a strong sense of community within each district and would represent a drastic change from Vermont's current number of 119 school districts. For that reason, it is difficult to see how they could create the conditions to meet the rest of the VSBA criteria.

VSBA continues to support the Redistricting Task Force's proposal because it creates the conditions for meeting the criteria. A logical next step would be for the Legislature to build upon the work of the Task Force by refining the proposal and filling in the details.

Public education is more than a delivery system for services; it is one of the most enduring democratic institutions we have. Our school districts are where communities learn to govern themselves, where families feel known, and where children experience what it means to belong to something larger than themselves. Any redistricting proposal must be judged not only by efficiency or scale, but by whether it preserves these essential democratic functions and creates the conditions for high-quality education to endure.

VSBA stands ready to work collaboratively with the Legislature to advance education reforms that support students, respect communities, and sustain taxpayers. We ask the Committee to embrace thoughtful, evidence-based change, and to ensure that local school boards have a meaningful voice in shaping the future of public education in Vermont.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on the hybrid scenario.