

February 26

Senator Seth Bongartz, Chair
Senator Kesha Ram Hinesdale
Senator Terry Williams, Clerk

Senator David Weeks, Vice-Chair
Senator Nadar Hashim
Senator Steven Heffernan

Dear Senators,

We are residents of Starksboro, a town in northeast Addison County which was consolidated after Act 46 into a single Supervisory District. We want to share our perspective on your proposed Map and the "Vermont School District Governance Modernization" proposal posted on February, 17, 2026. Our town and their residents have unique characteristics that should be accounted for in the education transformation discussion. Please consider our request, below, in connection with your further deliberations on school district governance.

We are extremely grateful for the effort and thought the Committee has put into its work on education transformation both last year, and this year. There have been moments in the legislative process when our communities have felt that no one was listening, and that no one was willing to acknowledge that Vermont is a diverse society with different realities and needs. The prospect of inflexible, involuntary consolidation into much larger Supervisory Districts places many of our smaller communities at risk to larger political forces. Some outside our communities do not fully appreciate that many of our schools may be doing a great job educating our schools in a financially responsible manner.

The strength of your proposed Map and Governance Modernization framework is that it can support diversity, and the different needs of our communities. In particular, we note that you propose a three-year process during which existing districts would consolidate into fewer districts. A three year process for conversations and decisions among communities and school districts makes sense. Thoughtful conversations among those directly affected by proposed changes will lead to better results, and avoid tensions and alienation. Our request to fine-tune this process is as follows:

During the two-year period in which communities are taking action to reduce the number of school districts prior to Board of Education proceedings, communities should be permitted to have consolidation discussions with other communities that may not be within the precise boundary lines of any proposed Map.

Allowing for such conversations will:

1. Support your Committee's goal of reducing the number of school districts statewide.

2. Provide greater flexibility among communities seeking the right fit with other communities that have shared educational values for students, and a common social outlook.
3. Leave undisturbed the other essential elements of education transformation designed to reduce education spending and education property taxes.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. We are happy to discuss these matters further with the Committee.

Sincerely,

Andrea Murnane, Starksboro
Frank Spina, Starksboro
Susan Reaber, Starksboro
Nancy Cornell, Starksboro
John Clarke, Starksboro
Herb Olson, Starksboro
Cecilia Elwert, Starksboro
Susan Klaiber, Starksboro
Molly Bidwell, Starksboro
Tirzha Osmun Palmer, Starksboro
Sam Blagden, Starksboro
Dan Baker, Starksboro
Dennis Casey, Starksboro
Lausanne Allen, Starksboro
Mary Barnet, Starksboro
Marguerite Gregory, Starksboro
Louis Dupont, Starksboro
Vera Ryersbach, Bristol
Joyce Diciano, Starksboro
Erin Buckwalter, Starksboro
Carin McCarthy, Starksboro
Dave Thompson, Starksboro
Rob Liotard, Starksboro
Marcia Liotard, Starksboro
Brad Johnson
Ellen Yount
Abigail Johnson
Jaime Deacon
Stefan Johnson