

**Vermont Senate
Senate Education Committee
4/15/26**

Testimony of Jamie Kinnarney, Superintendent of Schools, White River Valley Supervisory Union

My name is Jamie Kinnarney, and I serve as the Superintendent of Schools of the White River Valley Supervisory Union (WRV SU). I am now in the midst of my sixth year as Superintendent of Schools at WRV SU, and previously served as Principal for seven years at the Williamstown schools. This marks my fifteenth year as an education administrator in Vermont.

I want to thank the Senate Education Committee for allowing me the opportunity to testify today on Act 73 and the transition mechanisms that will occur within the proposal for school transformation, as provided via Act 73, which you all have been discussing over the past several weeks.

I also want to thank your Committee for your work and commitment in supporting **a hybrid approach to mapping that provides for both Supervisory Unions and Supervisory Districts in the future state. I find that to be commendable and want to once again share my gratitude for that approach.**

In addition, I want to also share my support in your consideration of either delaying the implementation of minimum class size requirements or eliminating that provision altogether. As was discussed last Friday by Senator Ram Hinsdale, *the financial savings will be a result of the implementation of the foundation formula within the bill you are discussing, and the rest of the discussions around provisions such as minimum class sizes, are an unnecessary distraction throughout the field.*

I am here today to focus a majority of my testimony on the work that will need to occur at the passage of this bill in order for the newly formed supervisory unions to not only become operational, but also exhibit efficiencies upon their implementation date. That date of implementation, as currently drafted (Tuesday, April 14) is July 1, 2027.

I would advise that, in order for implementation to occur and not result in the operation of parallel systems, it would be **advisable to begin implementation on July 1, 2028.**

There will be a great deal of work that will need to occur via the Transition Boards in order for these newly formed Supervisory Unions to become as effective and efficient as possible. It would also provide more time for the initial implementation of a call to order of the Transition Boards. I would suggest that 90 days is more realistic (over 30) in order to ensure that the Board Members are present and have fully engaged in understanding the work ahead.

This work includes, but is not limited to:

- Governing Bylaws
- Policy
- Curriculum
- Special Education Programming
- Collective Bargaining Agreements
- Fiscal Operations, including Accounts Payable (AP), Payroll, and accounting software changeover
- Budgeting
- School Information Systems (SIS)

It is my belief that the July 1, 2028, effective date of operations would result in the best possible operational status while also avoiding parallel/overlapping systems across these newly formed Supervisory Unions. Therefore, allowing them to have a Strategic Plan and a Roadmap for Success upon implementation. The alternative would be a system that would more than likely have several redundancies and not result in the school transformation goals as outlined via your policy proposals. I believe that by providing the needed time to effectively develop a Strategic Plan, these SUs can and will be prepared to deliver on the intent of Act 73. In my experience, having a clearly defined mission and vision helps an organization support improved educational outcomes in a more efficient manner.

This aforementioned work will also require consultation from experts, including legal. Therefore, I fully support and want to advocate for the importance of the transition grants provided via your proposal of \$250,000 for each newly enacted Supervisory Union in order for this important work to occur without increased assessment costs for the newly formed Supervisory Union.

While this work is occurring via the transition Board of newly formed SUs, there will also be significant work occurring within the district Boards of the SU to form voluntary merger study committees. This will also need contracted professional facilitation and support from legal. Therefore, transition grants to allow for this work to occur would be needed, but not nearly at the level of the aforementioned SU transition grant. I would

expect those fees within the voluntary merger study committees to run more like \$40,000 to \$50,000, while also encouraging you to consider some additional grant funds to allow for rebranding of the successfully merged districts to occur (\$20,000). Hence, resulting in much less need at the school district level within the Supervisory Union governance structure because the aforementioned larger transition grant will cover the larger portion of transition costs associated at the supervisory level.

I also wanted to take the opportunity to appreciate your acknowledgement of the State Board taking into consideration the geography of non-contiguous like operating districts under **Section 10-3 (B)**, but I would encourage you to consider removing the "do not need to be contiguous" from this section altogether. I fail to see how the merging of non-contiguous operators through potential forced merger by the State Board is needed. If districts choose to do so voluntarily, then support that work, but forcing like operators that have several towns dividing them (as an example of non-contiguous like operators in the current footprint of WRVSU) is problematic and is counterproductive to the voluntary approach that you've tried to highlight within your policy proposal.

I want to also emphasize that I continue to believe Vermonters understand common sense solutions, the power of local democracy to solve difficult situations, and have asked for and need a more transparent educational funding system, not a top-down mandate.

Therefore, I ask that you consider discussing why there is a need to provide for any method of forced consolidation within the proposed larger Supervisory Union boundaries without a final vote of the town, as provided via the voluntary merger study committee process provided via current state statute.

Respectfully submitted,

Jamie Kinnarney, Superintendent of Schools, WRVSU