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1	* * * Findings and Intent * * *
2	Sec. 1. FINDINGS; INTENT; PLAN [House draft 4.1, pg. 3-4]
3	* * *
4	(b) Intent; plan.
5	(1) To ensure each student is provided substantially equal educational
6	opportunities that will prepare them to thrive in a 21st-century world, it is the
7	intent of the General Assembly to work strategically, intentionally, and
8	thoughtfully to ensure that each incremental change made to Vermont's public
9	education system provides strength and support to its only constitutionally
10	required governmental service.
11	(2) It is further the intent of the General Assembly to:
12	(A) in the 2026 session:
13	(i) enact new, larger school district boundaries that would be
14	effective July 1, 2026;
15	(ii) enact updates to career and technical education governance
16	systems, both at the local and statewide levels, that are reflective of the larger
17	public education governance transformation to new, larger school districts;
18	(iii) create a coordinated and coherent statewide strategy for career
19	and technical education that is responsive to students and the State's workforce
20	needs and that provides opportunities for more integration between career and
21	technical education and traditional high school work; and

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1	(iv) begin the process to create voting wards within each school
2	district to ensure school board membership is apportioned in such a manner as
3	to achieve substantially equal weighting of the votes of all voters in the
4	election of school board members;
5	(B) provide or enable the provision of the necessary staffing,
6	resources, and support to the Agency of Education, the Secretary of State's
7	Office, town clerks, and other integral parties to the election system to hold the
8	first school board member elections within the newly created school districts in
9	a special election in March 2027; and
10	(C) provide or enable the provision of the necessary staffing,
11	resources, and support to the Agency of Education, State Board of Education,
12	and other integral parties to ensure that the necessary guidance and funding is
13	in place to allow for a smooth and successful transition between the operation
14	of Vermont's current 119 school districts to the new, larger school districts,
15	with new school districts assuming responsibility for the education of all
16	resident students on July 1, 2028.
17	* * * School Closure * * *
18	Sec. 11. PROHIBITION ON SCHOOL CLOSURE AND TRANSITION TO
19	PAYING TUITION [House draft 4.1, pg. 36-27]
20	(a) Notwithstanding any provision of law to the contrary, a school district
21	shall be prohibited from closing an existing public school and then providing

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1	for the education of its resident students by paying tuition for its students to
2	attend a public or approved independent school chosen by the parents of the
3	district's students. If a school district that closes an existing public school is
4	unable to provide for the education of its affected resident students in a
5	different school or schools operated by the district, the school district shall
6	provide for the education of its resident students by designating three or fewer
7	public schools to serve as the public school or schools of the district.
8	Notwithstanding any provision of law to the contrary, if designation is required
9	pursuant to this subsection, the designation process contained in 16 V.S.A.
10	§ 827 shall apply to schools operating grades kindergarten through grade 12, or
11	any subset of grades therein.
12	(b) Notwithstanding subsection (a) of this section, if a school district closes
13	a public school in a geographically isolated area, as defined by the State Board
14	of Education, or the school district is adjacent to a school district that tuitions
15	its students in the same grades as the closed school as of July 1, 2025, the
16	school district that is closing the school may tuition its affected resident
17	students.
18	* * * Schools Eligible to Receive Public Tuition * * *
19	Sec. 21. 16 V.S.A. § 828 is amended to read: [House draft 4.1 pgs. 52-53]
20	§ 828. TUITION TO APPROVED SCHOOLS; AGE; APPEAL
21	(a) A school district shall not pay the tuition of a student except to:

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1	(1) a public school, located in Vermont;
2	(2) an approved independent school, an independent school meeting
3	education quality standards, that:
4	(A) is located in Vermont;
5	(B) is approved under section 166 of this title on or before July 1,
6	<u>2025;</u>
7	(C) is located within either:
8	(i) a supervisory district that does not operate a public school for
9	some or all grades as of July 1, 2024; or
10	(ii) a supervisory union with one or more member school districts
11	that does not operate a public school for some or all grades as of July 1, 2024;
12	(D) had at least 25 percent of its Vermont resident student enrollment
13	composed of students attending on a district-funded tuition basis pursuant to
14	chapter 21 of this title during the 2023–2024 school year; and
15	(E) complies with the minimum class size requirements contained in
16	subdivision 165(a)(9) of this title and State Board rule; provided, however, that
17	if a school is unable to comply with the class size minimum standards due to
18	geographic isolation or a school has developed an implementation plan to meet
19	the class size minimum requirements, the school may ask the State Board to
20	grant it a waiver from this subdivision (E), which decision shall be final;
21	(3) a tutorial program approved by the State Board;

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1	(4) an approved education program, or:
2	(5) an independent school in another state or country approved under the
3	laws of that state or country, that complies with the reporting requirement
4	under subsection 4010(e) of this title, a public school located in another state;
5	<u>or</u>
6	(6) a therapeutic approved independent school located in Vermont or
7	another state or country that is approved under the laws of that state or country.
8	(b) nor shall payment Payment of tuition on behalf of a person shall not be
9	denied on account of age.
10	(c) Unless otherwise provided, a person who is aggrieved by a decision of a
11	school board relating to eligibility for tuition payments, the amount of tuition
12	payable, or the school the person may attend, may appeal to the State Board
13	and its decision shall be final.
14	(d) As used in this section, "therapeutic approved independent school"
15	means an approved independent school that limits enrollment for publicly
16	funded students residing in Vermont to students who are on an individualized
17	education program or plan under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of
18	1973, 29 U.S.C. § 794, or who are enrolled pursuant to a written agreement
19	between a local education agency and the school or pursuant to a court order.