



TO: Senate Education Committee

FROM: Sue Ceglowski, Executive Director, Vermont School Boards Association

RE: H.54 Draft 5.1 and H.480 Draft 13.2 Testimony

DATE: May 13, 2025

Good afternoon. My name is Sue Ceglowski. I'm the Executive Director for the Vermont School Boards Association (VSBA), and I appreciate the chance to speak with you today about H.54, Draft 5.1 and H.480, Draft 13.2.

H.54/Cell Phone Free Schools

The first time I introduced the VSBA to this committee, I spoke about the resolutions process the Association utilizes to develop positions taken by the Association on issues of importance to Vermont school boards. Resolutions may include recommendations for action by the VSBA, local school boards, the Legislature, the Executive Branch or other decision-making bodies. They are approved by membership at the annual business meeting of the Association each October.

At the most recent annual meeting, in October of 2024, the VSBA membership approved a resolution on cell phones in schools:

“CELL PHONES IN SCHOOL [2024] The VSBA supports legislation that would require school districts to adopt a policy concerning use of cell phones and other personal electronic devices in schools. The policy shall address, at a minimum, the specific circumstances or time periods during which cell phone or personal electronic device use is permitted, when their use is prohibited, and any relevant exceptions for instances such as disability accommodation, medical need, or other emergency.”

Based on the resolution, VSBA supports the cell phone provisions of H.54. We've communicated concerns to the Agency of Education regarding the Agency's ability to develop and issue the cell phone model policy in a timely manner as well as concerns regarding the Agency's capacity to review and update the model policy on a regular basis. These concerns stem from delays in the development and updating of other model policies under the authority of the Agency of Education. We're basing our agreement with the cell phones provisions of the

proposed bill on assurances from the Agency that development, issuance, and updating of the model policy will occur in a timely manner.

We appreciate that the Agency of Education raised the issue of potential cost implications for schools—particularly related to training, enforcement, and possible changes to physical or technological infrastructure. On May 8, the Agency recommended to the House Education Committee that a fiscal note should be included to assess the financial impact on the education system and to ensure that schools are adequately supported in meeting the policy requirements. We echo this recommendation which is offered to ensure the success of this initiative, not as an impediment.

H.54/Social Media

VSBA does not have a resolution covering use of social media platforms in education. Therefore, we will not support or oppose the social media section of H.54. Rather, we will provide a few comments.

Social media is not defined in H.54, Draft 5.1. This may be by design - the definition could change as technology evolves. Without a definition in the law, school boards will be left to define social media on their own in any policies they develop to implement this section of the bill. In that case, they may look to the Agency of Education's model policy on Electronic Communications Between Employees and Students (required by [Act 5 of 2018](#)) which defines social media as follows: *"Social media is any form of online publication or presence that allows interactive communication, including, but not limited to, social networks, blogs, websites and internet forums. Examples of social media include, but are not limited to, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, and Google+."* This definition is quite broad and could sweep in learning management systems, classroom communication apps, and educational software.

The Agency has not updated the model policy on Electronic Communications Between Employees and Students since its issuance in 2020. Whether or not the social media section remains in H.54, the entire model policy, including the definition of social media, should be reviewed and updated.

As noted above, any fiscal note on H.54 should include the projected cost for school districts to ensure compliance with the social media section of the bill.

H.480/Cardiac Emergency Response Plans

VSBA does not have a formal position on the requirement for cardiac emergency response plans in H.480, Draft 13.2. We do have concerns about the use of the word "policies" on page 24, line 6: "(c) Plan requirements. The cardiac emergency response plan and AEAP shall include, at a minimum, policies on: . . . "

This language requires the development of eight policies. As noted in previous testimony to this Committee, policy adoption is assigned to the school boards by law. Unless you intend to have

school boards adopt policies on the eight topics listed on lines 7-16 of page 24 of the bill, we recommend striking the word “policies.”

We also recommend that a fiscal note should be included to assess the financial impact on the education system and to ensure that schools are adequately supported in meeting the cardiac response plan requirements, including training and the purchase of automated external defibrillators (AEDs). Please note that Vermont School Boards Insurance Trust’s (VSBIT) Safety Assistance Grants are limited and not specific to AEDs. Schools may have already prioritized their grants for other safety expenses. Furthermore, not all Vermont schools are members of VSBIT and therefore not eligible for the grants. Finally, it’s our position that the Agency of Education should provide the ongoing staff training in CPR and AED use so that the cost of the training does not add expenses to school district budgets.