

TESTIMONY OF THE SOFTWARE AND INFORMATION INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION (SIIA)

Before the Vermont Senate Education Committee
Regarding H.650, Educational Technology Products

April 2026

Chair Bongartz and members of the Committee, SIIA represents nearly 400 companies delivering educational technology to K–12 schools nationwide, including Vermont. We share this legislature’s concern about children’s wellbeing. That shared concern is precisely why precision matters—and why H.650, as drafted, misses the mark.

Educational Technology Works

The concern driving this legislation is legitimate. Parents and educators are right to ask hard questions about technology in classrooms. But the correct question is not how much screen time students are getting—it is what they are doing on those screens, who governs it, and what the evidence shows about outcomes. That distinction matters enormously, because the technology these bills target and the technology that genuinely concerns parents are not the same thing.

What disappears under blanket device restrictions is specific: the reading assessment that flags a struggling second-grader in time to intervene; the adaptive platform that gives a student with a disability the access the law requires; the only high-quality instructional content available to students in Vermont’s most under-resourced communities. In a roundtable convened by New America’s Teaching, Learning, and Tech program, students recognize the risks of technology—including distraction, AI overuse, and less critical thinking— but distinguish these risks from complete bans. One participant noted that decision-makers may overlook technology’s support for learning when parental concerns are primarily centered around their children’s use of consumer technology outside of school. The call is not for removal, but thoughtful integration based on research and teacher training.

The evidence for institutional educational technology is rigorous. RAND found blended learning models can double typical annual learning gains. SRI International documented 75% more learning from digital feedback tools while closing achievement gaps for struggling students. Sixty-eight percent of educators report saving five hours per week with EdTech—time reinvested directly in students. And the nations that consistently outperform the United States—Singapore, Japan, South Korea, Estonia—are not low-technology systems. High performance and thoughtful technology integration go hand in hand.

EdTech Is Already Heavily Regulated

Institutional EdTech is not an unregulated wild west. Vendors serving Vermont schools already operate under a variety of federal laws including FERPA, COPPA, ESSA, CIPA, IDEA, and the ADA—a rigorous framework covering data privacy, content filtering, evidence of effectiveness, and accessibility. Critically, EdTech purchased with federal dollars must meet ESSA’s evidence-of-effectiveness tiers; consumer technology faces no such requirement. School-managed devices also operate within a supervised environment: for example, under CIPA, schools are required to filter content and block harmful material. H.650’s certification layer duplicates existing accountability without adding meaningful student protection, imposing compliance costs that risk driving smaller providers out of Vermont and leaving districts with fewer, more expensive options.

H.650 Fails to Distinguish EdTech from Consumer Technology

Institutional EdTech is purpose-built for formal learning environments, anchored in pedagogy, governed by school contracts, and prohibited from using student data for commercial marketing. Consumer technology—social media platforms, streaming services, general-purpose apps—carries none of those requirements. By defining “educational technology product” to cover any software that “may collect, process, or transmit student data,” H.650 applies the same regulatory regime to an ESSA-compliant adaptive reading platform as to a consumer app with no pedagogical governance whatsoever. Effective legislation should reflect that distinction—not erase it.

Vermont’s Most Vulnerable Students Bear the Greatest Risk

H.650’s restrictions will not fall equally. Students with disabilities depend on EdTech as legally required accommodations under IDEA and the ADA; restricting certified tools directly compromises their access to the curriculum. Students in rural and lower-income Vermont communities frequently rely on EdTech as their only access to high-quality instructional content. The students most affected by imprecise EdTech restrictions are often the very students these policies claim to protect.

A Better Path Forward

SIIA agrees with the problem this bill is trying to solve. But the answer to concerns about technology in classrooms is not a blanket prohibition—it is the educator-governed, evidence-required, outcomes-accountable framework that institutional EdTech already operates under. SIIA urges the Committee to adopt a study-first approach modeled on Virginia’s SB 568, directing the Agency of Education to develop evidence-based model policies in consultation with educators, researchers, disability advocates, and EdTech providers. This gives Vermont the precision it needs—protecting students from genuine harms without eliminating the tools its schools, and its most vulnerable students, depend on every day.

We welcome the opportunity to work with this Committee and are available to provide additional information at your request.

Respectfully submitted,

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Software & Information Industry Association (SIIA)