



To: Senate Education Committee

From: Sue Ceglowski, Executive Director and General Counsel, VSBA

Re: H.931 Proposed New Section

Date: April 30, 2026

Thank you for the invitation to testify on the negotiations process for health benefits of public school employees. I am Sue Ceglowski, Executive Director for the Vermont School Boards Association (VSBA).

We ask this committee to consider adding a new section to H.931 which would revise one sentence in 16 V.S.A Ch. 61 – The Commission on Public School Employee Health Benefits. This Commission was originally created as an effort to contain the pressure of rising health care benefit costs as they impact the Education Fund. The results of previous rounds of negotiation have not reached that goal, in part, based on the current structure of this statute.

Specifically, we ask for the following change:

16 VSA 2105(b)(2)(A) – The representatives of school employees and the representatives of school employers shall submit to the VLRB, arbitrator, or arbitrators their last best offer on all issues remaining in dispute prior to the VLRB or arbitration hearing. The VLRB, arbitrator, or arbitrators shall select ~~one of the last best offers without amendment, submitted by the parties prior to the VLRB or arbitration hearing in its entirety without amendment~~ between the last best offer of each party on an issue-by-issue basis, with or without amendment. The parties shall not be permitted to modify their last best offers post hearing. Prior to the issuance of the decision of the VLRB, arbitrator, or arbitrators, nothing shall prohibit the parties from settling the matters in dispute.

The Arbitration Panel Decision following the second round of negotiations contained the following statement – “The Arbitration Panel has considered the statutory factors and reviewed the evidence and testimony in making its final decision. As stated at the outset, this Panel’s statutory authority is to award either the Employer’s LBO proposal package or the Employees’ LBO proposal package; it cannot accept portions of the Employer’s or Employees’ packages.

Perhaps this Arbitration Panel would have reached slightly different conclusions than [of the finder of fact] Mr. Cochran, as there are no clearly right or wrong answers to these weighty and complicated issues.”

While the VSBA continues to advocate for greater revisions to this statute, we believe that even this minor adjustment can have an impact on one cost driver.