



Newark Street School

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Subject: Testimony Regarding Act 73 Class Size Policy Implementation – Request for Extension

To: Vermont State Senate Committee on Education

From: Tim Mulligan, Principal, Newark Street School

Date: 4/7/26

My name is Tim Mulligan, and I have had the privilege of serving as the Principal of the Newark Street School since July 2017. I am writing today to formally request a delay in the implementation of the Act 73 Class Size policy. While we understand the legislative intent behind these standards, the current timeline threatens to undermine the very success and sustainability that our small, rural community has worked tirelessly to achieve.

A Proven Model for Educational Evolution

The Newark Street School serves as a powerful example of how a community can successfully navigate the complexities of modern education. While our school was identified by the state a decade ago as an institution in need of improvement, we have spent the last several years proving that excellence is achievable through focused growth and adaptability. For three consecutive years, we have demonstrated significant academic progress, with students consistently scoring above state averages and maintaining high growth in reading and math district assessments. We recognize that there is no single right way to deliver high-quality education; while we are proud of our current success with 53 students in multigrade configurations, we also understand that creating schools with more students per grade level opens up new and exciting opportunities for students, teachers, and school communities.

That said, it is difficult to reconcile a rushed reconfiguration when our school is currently thriving and physically sound. Following the Act 46 merger, we purposefully utilized capital funds to renovate our facility, ensuring that we have a high-quality, operationally efficient environment that can serve as a stable foundation for whatever future configurations best serve the district.

A Track Record of Fiscal and Operational Responsibility

The Newark and greater Kingdom East School District community has a long history of fiscal responsibility. We are not a community that avoids difficult decisions; rather, we lean into them when they serve the long-term interests of our students.

We recognize that Newark currently has few young families, and we have already taken proactive, responsible steps to optimize our resources: Last year, the district chose not to open a Kindergarten class due to low enrollment. And next year, we will not host a Kindergarten or First Grade; those students will attend another KESD school of choice.

These decisions are made with social, economic, and environmental sustainability in mind as these responsibilities are embedded into our core values. We are already doing the work that Act 73 seeks to encourage, but we are doing it through a lens of local expertise and community care.

The Critical Need for Time

Effective, lasting change cannot be rushed. When a policy as significant as Act 73 is pressured by an aggressive timeline, decisions become hasty. Hasty decisions lead to unforeseen consequences that can dismantle years of progress.

I am advocating for time—specifically for:

- **Local Collaboration:** Allowing the town, district, and local stakeholders to collaborate on a vision that fits our unique geography.
- **Impact Analysis:** Fully exploring the options for reconfiguration and understanding the long-term effects on student well-being.
- **Resource Alignment:** State-level resources, particularly construction aid, must be fully considered. If legislation proposes that student populations be relocated or schools reconfigured, the financial infrastructure must be in place to support those transitions safely and equitably.

Conclusion

Newark Street School is a success story. We are a high-performing, fiscally responsible, and renovated facility that serves as the heart of our rural community. We ask that you grant us the time necessary to continue our transition thoughtfully, rather than forcing a timeline that risks the quality of education our students have earned.

Thank you for your time and for your commitment to Vermont's students.

Respectfully,

Tim Mulligan

Principal, Newark Street School