

From: Cindy Hale <cindy.j.h.hale@gmail.com>

Sent: Wednesday, November 19, 2025 5:15 PM

To: Seth Bongartz <SBongartz@leg.state.vt.us>; Nader Hashim <NHashim@leg.state.vt.us>;

Terry K. Williams <TKWilliams@leg.state.vt.us>; Steven Heffernan <sheffernan@leg.state.vt.us>

Cc: Kesha Ram Hinsdale <kramhinsdale@leg.state.vt.us>; David Weeks

<DWeeks@leg.state.vt.us>; Lindsey Schreier <Lindsey.Schreier@vtleg.gov>

Subject: [External] Following up on Woodstock Listening Sessions

[External]

Dear Senators,

I am writing to thank you for visiting Woodstock High School yesterday. My husband, Dave Hale and I attended the student and community listening sessions yesterday afternoon. Although we are not Woodstock residents or parents of alumni--we are residents of Hartland--Dave and I attended out of interest as well as concern for the redistricting efforts being put forth by Governor Scott.

We were heartened to hear the voices of the Woodstock students bringing up many very important points. One of the common themes among students as well as adult participants was the importance of community. Dave and I strongly agree with this. As we heard yesterday, and already knew, many people choose to live in Vermont because of its small towns and close-knit communities. In many of these towns, the school plays a key part in tying together the community. Therefore, if small schools across the state are closed, the very fabric and character that attracts new families to Vermont would be erased. We heard first hand from some young parents yesterday that if things change, causing districts to become larger and commute time to school longer, they would seek another state in which to live.

I am sure that the people who attended the meeting were relieved to hear that Mountain Views SU would likely not be split up because of the wonderful things that are happening within those schools. I have great concern, however, for students in other districts which might not be so lucky, and who would end up needing to travel a long distance to attend a different school. I would encourage the Education Committee, when addressing the question, "How do we provide excellent educational opportunity for every Vermont child?" to consider the fact that each student is unique, and the best possible educational opportunities will look different for every student. Requiring students to leave their communities and attend schools a greater distance from home might provide them with more opportunities in classes and extracurricular offerings, but at the same time, could decrease their quality of life by adding the stress of increased travel time and the need to be away from their home community. In response yesterday to a student's concern about long distance travel time hindering participation in sports or extracurricular activities, I heard one of you answer that it would be up to "what the parent is willing to do for the child" regarding transportation home from (and

therefore the ability to participate in) after-school activities. This is a "red flag" for inequity as not all families have a parent who could drive to pick up their student, and not all families with a driving age student can afford an extra car for their student to use. Thus, in trying to give equal opportunities in one way, the system could actually become more exclusive in another way.

As a former elementary school teacher at Barstow Memorial School in Chittenden and also in South Berwick, Maine, I am very aware of the fact that for students "one size does not fit all" and that often less is more. I encourage all who are involved in possible redistricting to stay focused on what is actually best for the children. Dave and I are grateful that we were able to do this for our own two children. Thanks to the fact that school choice exists in Hartland, our children, who are now happy and successful high school graduates, could each attend a school which would help them to thrive--one at a small independent school (The Sharon Academy) and the other, a larger public school (Hartford High School). We sincerely hope that future Hartland students will have the opportunity to make choices about their high school education, whether that be at public or independent schools. We know that independent schools play an important role in educating some of Vermont's students, and we support continued access for students of all socioeconomic backgrounds.

Thank you for reading this message. We appreciate the work you are doing in listening to the concerns and hopes of Vermonters for education in the state.

Sincerely,
Cynthia Hale