

Subject: Written Testimony - Support for Local Control and Rural Education

Sent: Tuesday, December 16, 2025 9:31 AM

Dear Chair and Members of the Senate Education Committee,

Thank you for taking the time to visit the White River Valley Supervisory Union and for providing an opportunity for community members to share their perspectives. I appreciate the Committee's willingness to engage directly with those impacted by proposed education reforms.

My name is Doug Pfohl, and I am a resident of Stockbridge, Vermont, and the proud parent of two children—a six-year-old daughter and an eight-year-old son—both of whom attend Stockbridge Central School. I am writing to submit formal testimony regarding the importance of preserving local control and sustaining rural education in Vermont.

Stockbridge Central School and the White River Valley Supervisory Union demonstrate that small, rural districts can operate effectively and responsibly. Our district spends below the state per-pupil average, and tax stability has been maintained through prudent fiscal management. These outcomes reflect strong local leadership and accountability to the communities served.

Given the geographic size and sparse population of our district, consolidation would require students to spend significant time in transit each day, often with limited supervision. Extended transportation times would reduce access to extracurricular activities and essential educational opportunities, placing rural students at a disadvantage relative to peers in more densely populated areas.

In addition to its educational role, Stockbridge Central School serves as a central civic and cultural institution for our town. Its closure would represent a loss of community identity and cohesion. Further, policies such as Act 73 raise concerns about the erosion of local governance, including the potential loss of locally elected school boards and local budget votes—decisions that directly affect students and families.

Vermont faces an aging and declining population, yet families like mine are choosing to live here intentionally—to raise children, build community, and invest in the state's future. As remote work expands, access to strong, locally rooted public education is a critical factor in whether families choose to remain in or relocate to rural Vermont.

I respectfully urge the Committee to reconsider approaches that weaken local control and instead pursue solutions that strengthen rural schools, recognize the realities of Vermont's rural geography, and support long-term community sustainability.

Thank you for your time, consideration, and public service.

Respectfully,

Doug Pfohl

Stockbridge, Vermont