



Vermont State House  
115 State Street  
Montpelier, VT 05602

February 4, 2026

The Vermont Senate Committee on Finance  
Friends of Vermont Public Education Comments on S.220 and Sen. Gulick Amendment

Dear Chair Cummings and Members of the Vermont Senate Committee on Finance,

Friends of Vermont Public Education (FVPE) is a nonprofit dedicated to protecting and strengthening Vermont's public schools. We advocate for clear accountability and transparency wherever public education dollars are spent. We support the Committee's goal of ensuring predictability and fairness across Vermont's education system.

With respect to the amendment offered by Sen. Gulick, we share the underlying concern that a spending cap applied to public schools alone risks creating an imbalance if publicly funded private tuition is not meaningfully addressed. We applaud this effort to acknowledge that this is taxpayer funded education and that restraint should not fall solely on public school districts while other recipients of public dollars operate under different expectations.

The amendment's new transparency provisions for independent schools receiving public tuition are a constructive step. Requiring compliance with public records law for publicly funded activity and annual certification that public funds are not subsidizing private pay students establishes reasonable baseline accountability and moves the policy conversation in the right direction.

However, these provisions do not address the core fiscal concern driving this bill. If public schools are subject to spending caps while tuition paid to private schools is not comparably restrained, districts that tuition students will be disproportionately harmed. In prior years, communities have repeatedly asked certain tuition receiving schools to moderate increases in order to help local budgets pass, with little success. Absent enforceable limits, there is no reason to believe this dynamic will change.

If the legislature determines that spending growth must be constrained to protect taxpayers, that principle should apply consistently to all recipients of public education dollars. Absent that, all Vermonters will be paying for uncapped tuition increases in our private school system. Transparency is important, but it does not on its own ensure fiscal parity.

FVPE urges the committee to build on the direction reflected in Sen. Gulick's amendment and ensure that any final version of S.220 avoids penalizing public schools and tuitioning districts by

leaving private tuition increases effectively unchecked. Without that alignment, the bill risks shifting pressure rather than resolving it.

Friends Of Vermont Public Education

Geo Honigford, South Royalton

Ken Fredette, Wallingford

Kim Gleason, Grand Isle

Greg Hughes, Bethel

Krista Huling, Cambridge

Jess DeCarolus, Groton

Neil Odell, Norwich