January 14, 2026

Jeffrey Francis, Interim Executive Director
Vermont Superintendents Association

Senate Finance Committee
Testimony on [S. 220](#) - Limiting Growth in District Ed Spending Per Pupil FYs 28 and 29

Thank you for the invitation to speak with you regarding S.220 this afternoon.

By way of introduction, I am Jeff Francis, temporarily assisting the Vermont Superintendents Association while its executive director, Chelsea Myers, is taking parental leave.

I have three points to make regarding S.220.

- First, it is worth noting the timing of the bill's introduction, especially in light of media reports that in the bill's conceptualization, Senator Baruth wanted to have the capping provisions apply to FY2027. He was clear about his disappointment in the Report of the School Redistricting Task Force and what he predicts will be delays in Act 73 implementation and future savings as a result. The Task Force has testified to the legitimate reasons that it took the approach that it did. In terms of reaction from the field, superintendents are supportive of the goals of Act 73, and if the FY27 application of S.220 had been proposed, there would have been unnecessary and counterproductive consternation in the field. Local school district officials are doing their very best to develop and present responsible budgets to the electorate. This is a time when all parties need to be working together.
- With respect to allowable growth provisions generally, it is fair to say that they are not typically regarded as good public policy, and especially in an education delivery system as complex in its organization as Vermont's. Prior efforts by state policy makers to impose capping provisions have resulted in determinations of disequalizing and other unintended effects based on district size, configuration, influence of major cost-drivers and historic budgeting approaches and voting behaviors. Capping provisions don't address cost drivers. Local school officials and many legislators understand this.
- Notwithstanding the previous point, given the efforts pointed toward Act 73 implementation and the associated transition to a foundation formula, it MAY make sense to apply a statutory mechanism to address spending in the transition years. However, the utility of such a mechanism remains to be seen. Any such policy lever should only be enacted as part of a well-developed, purposeful, comprehensive effort to achieve the responsible implementation of a foundation system.

Thank you.