

Testimony: Senate Education

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My name is Morgan Daybell, I am the Past President of the Vermont Association of School Business Officials (VASBO) and the CFO for Franklin Northeast Supervisory Union. Thank you for the invitation to testify on the Governor's Education Transformation Plan.

Like you, we are working through the details on the Governor's proposal that were released yesterday, and waiting for more to come in the coming weeks. VASBO would appreciate the opportunity to return and discuss the plan once it is formally proposed as legislation.

VASBO recognizes the potential benefits of district consolidation and supports exploring options that enhance educational opportunities for all students. However, determining the optimal number of districts should be data-driven, considering various factors including student population density, transportation logistics, economies of scale, and community impact.

VASBO is open to exploring alternative funding models that ensure equitable and adequate resources for all Vermont students. While we understand the Governor's proposed foundation formula is a key component to his plan, we require further details to fully assess its potential impact. We look forward to a comprehensive explanation of the formula and answers to questions, such as:

- How will we transition to a foundation formula?
- How will the foundation amount be adjusted in the future?
- Will districts be allowed to spend over the foundation amount?
- If so, how will equity be ensured so that we are complying with Brigham?
- What will budget votes look like in districts accepting the foundation amount?
- How will this proposal address underlying cost drivers, such as increasing salary and healthcare costs and facility needs?

The transitions associated with Act 127, the last-minute fix of Act 84, and the resulting chaos surrounding last spring's school budget votes taught us the importance of thoughtful implementation. Any change to operational procedures requires both sufficient lead time to avoid altering rules mid-budget cycle, and robust modeling,

incorporating input from the field, to identify unintended consequences *before* they necessitate real-time legislative intervention.

Finally, we appreciate the Governor's effort to alleviate funding pressures this year, providing space to explore systemic changes to education funding. There are many parts of the General Fund budget that impact the day to day operation of schools. Shifting money from the General Fund to reduce property taxes is counterproductive if it necessitates cuts to other key programs, particularly mental health services, which ultimately increase the needs schools address on a daily basis.