

My name is Marc Schaubert, I'm the executive director for the Coalition for Vermont Student Equity as well as a member of the River Valleys Unified School District Board in Windham County.

It's good to see you all again. Thank you for holding this public hearing so that more Vermonters have the opportunity to weigh in on this very important topic.

Simply put, we know the current weights are wrong and we are looking for this task force and the legislature to correct this 2 decade long injustice. And thanks to the 2019 report that you've all come together to write legislation to implement, we now have an empirical basis for correcting the weights.

The only way to correct the current inequity and have a level playing field for all districts and students across the state, is to fix the formula. We have no empirical basis for any other method.

One of the concepts that some find attractive about using categorical aid in place of the weights is that it gives the state the ability to police what those districts do with the money... But we are asking for equity and those wealthy districts that have been overweight for more than 2 decades haven't been policed on their allocation of resources, why should, if I may be an optimist for a moment, the previously underweight districts, be policed on how they allocate resources. Instead, use EQS applied evenly across the board to ensure ALL Vermont children are receiving their constitutionally required equitable educational opportunities.

Chair Kornheiser, earlier today you pointed out that the legislature can't legislate in perpetuity. That is one of the primary reasons we oppose using categorical aid in place of the weights. At any time the legislature can turn a grant into a political football. Just look at the progression of the small schools grant from one based on a formula, to an incentive merger grant, to Act 73 which did away with the incentive altogether and just gives it to all eligible districts.

Weights, on the other hand, are determined based on data and statistics. And as Dr. Kolbe recommends, should be re-evaluated based on those every 4 or 5 years.

I apologize for being so direct, but no district should have their taxing capacity and thus resources be determined by who speaks the loudest or has the most pull. The weights create equity across the state, they don't raise taxes for all Vermonters as categorical aid would, and they create a level playing field for all Vermont children.

Please implement the weights as recommended in the report.

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