

Hello, my name is Cate MacLachlan. I live in Burlington and have two children, both of whom have attended Burlington schools since Kindergarten. One is now in college, the other a sophomore at BHS.

I am here today to testify because of my growing concern about what will be done with education funding. I am asking you to update our educational funding formula as is recommended by the 2019 UVM/Rutgers Report. This report, commissioned by you, the legislature, makes clear recommendations for how to fix the inequities in our current system. You asked for experts to make recommendation and yet, somehow, you are looking for alternatives.

The UVM/Rutgers report has laid out the ways in which we as Vermonters can fund our education system in a more equitable way - a way that can support the districts that have been underweighted for the past 20 years. I urge the legislature to look to the future, and do what is right to create a system that is reliable and sustainable for schools all over Vermont.

Education is the foundation for a successful small “d” democracy. All children deserve access to equitable educational opportunities, regardless of their family’s income, their first language, the size of their school or where they live. By separating out certain types of learners, a separate system will be created, one that puts additional administrative burden on schools already challenged to do their best.

Make no mistake. My district exciting and unique in its diversity. Our family has made a choice to live in Burlington and support our schools. But our experiences with families outside of our district constantly reveal inequities, and gaps. We watch with worry as parents with means deliberate about moving to other districts with more

resources in their school. It is happening around the state. Our district is the future, and we need to ensure that it is resourced appropriately. We need to be assured that we are creating a system that will support changing demographics in a predictable way.

Please remember: the underweighted districts are our most diverse, our most rural and our poorest. I have heard comments that this change will damage the schools that are currently overweighted. I ask you: what damage have we done to the schools that have been underweighted for the past twenty years? What damage will we perpetuate if we don't address this inequity? This current alternative task force proposal, rooted in politics, weighs the wants of the privileged, over the needs of those with less privilege.

The state has the opportunity to make this right, to fix a problem created twenty years ago. It should not be seen as taking away from one's prosperity if the system is looking out for everyone. This is core to who we are as Vermonters. It is not only a moral obligation, it's enshrined in Vermont's constitution. All of Vermont's children deserve the opportunities for success and we have enough resources, if equitably distributed, to achieve this goal.