

Co-Chairs Senator Hardy and Rep. Kornheiser and Members of the Pupil Weighting Task Force,

I am a Board member of the Windham Southeast School District. I'm one of two Putney representatives on the Putney, Brattleboro, Guilford and Dummerston forced merger board, and formerly an early childhood educator for decades.

While I appreciate your time and attention and have no doubt you are all trying to do the right thing, I am beyond frustrated and disappointed by the direction you seem to have wandered. You did exactly what we all feared you would do, which is to attempt to restudy a study and bite off so much that we are now at the second to last meeting and have had no real time to understand or respond to your proposal.

Dr. Kolbe warned members of the House Ways and Means Committee earlier this year that they ran the risk, under S.13, of going a mile wide and an inch deep. This appears to be what has happened. So now we are being asked to accept a system that assigns dollar amounts to students while still stripping ELL students out of the formula without any real basis for comparison. Meanwhile a brilliant piece of research conducted by UVM and Rutgers languishes. This is an absolute shame. This time could have been used to create a thoughtful plan to roll in weights and impacts, with an unprecedented amount of federal funds in our state right now to help ease this process. Now we are left with one meeting left, a proposal that is puzzling to everyone I have spoken to, (do we even understand how it will be funded?) and very little else that is comforting to districts that have been harmed by 20 years of inequity.

I would also like to remind you that one of the named stakeholders in this process, the Vermont School Boards Association, recently approved a resolution which states:

“The Vermont School Boards Association fully supports the findings as presented in the Pupil Weighting Factors Report dated December 24, 2019. And furthermore, the Vermont School Boards Association requests the Vermont Legislature to thoughtfully and expeditiously establish an implementation plan for the Report’s recommendations.”

But it’s not too late to correct course. Please, make this right. History will show very clearly that equity was the right side to be on. Correct the weights for poverty, rurality, small schools and English language learners and provide an updated simulation of B.1 so that we can see how your policy assumptions stack up to our earliest preferred scenario.

Brattleboro has a high poverty rate and Dummerston and Putney are not far behind. We have struggled to meet the needs of students. The federal funds from the CARES and ARP Acts have helped to fund some of our needs. Please make this right.

Thank you.

Liz Adams
WSESD
Putney, VT.

