



Vermont
Superintendents
Association

To: The Task Force on the Implementation of the Pupil Weighting Factors Report

From: Jeffrey Francis, Executive Director for the Vermont Superintendents Association

Re: Draft Report of the Task Force

Date: December 10, 2021.

First, thank you to all members of the Task Force for the energy and effort that you have invested in this process to date, for developing the draft report and for your past, current and future efforts to follow through in a manner that will improve equity and opportunity within the education funding and delivery system in Vermont. Appreciation is also extended to all those who have contributed to the work including your staff and the witnesses who have shared their insights, comments and expertise.

This work is of tremendous importance and consequence, especially in light of the considerations and potential decisions that you have included within the report, and the context, analysis and future decisions that will inform those deliberations and decisions.

When I received the draft report on Wednesday this week, I sent it on to all members of the Vermont Superintendents Association. As you well know, because of the pandemic, local school officials have been occupied by the challenges of operating school systems amidst the most disruptive conditions ever collectively experienced by the system overall, and those officials have had little time to focus on the work of the Task Force to this point. This is true for all personnel working in public education including superintendents, who are the chief executive officers for the systems that they serve, and who hold significant and comprehensive responsibility for all school operations.

For this reason, most superintendents have not had the time or ability to follow the work of the Task Force in detail, but like me, they are keenly aware of the importance of the work and are heavily invested in supporting the best outcomes.

After all, what is being contemplated are significant modifications to a funding system which was successfully established in order to bring more equity in opportunities to students and treat taxpayers and communities more fairly.

Overall, that system has worked well **and** there is broad recognition and acceptance of the fact that the time has come to improve equity within the system through, in the most basic terms, improved access to more equitable resources for students with recognized, specific, needs.

In the absence of thorough feedback from the superintendents on the contents of the draft report, which was impossible given the short time between the release of the report and your meeting today, I was disinclined to provide preliminary specific comments on their collective behalf. The nature of the decisions under consideration and the inevitable impact on individual school districts and the students they serve does not lend itself to input arrived at hastily on behalf of the Association.

In order to facilitate work by superintendents collectively in response to the report, I am arranging work sessions scheduled over the next several weeks, where superintendents will be invited to come together to delve into the report and work collaboratively in an effort to better understand and consider the information, recommendations and decision points that it sets out.

It is unknown to me at this point whether the Association will be able to achieve consensus with respect to recommendations around those decision points - but that will be our goal. To support this effort, I am hoping that the Task Force will inform me regarding who I should be contacting with questions and requests for additional information as we conduct our work.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you this morning and thank you again for your efforts to date.