



STATE OF VERMONT
GENERAL ASSEMBLY
TASK FORCE ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE
PUPIL WEIGHTING FACTORS REPORT

October 22, 2021

Dear Professor Kolbe,

Thank you for your ongoing testimony about the Pupil Weighting Factors Report, and your offer at our last meeting to assist in recalculating the weights presented in the Report. We appreciate the time and information you've provided thus far. Last week we posed some specific questions via email that we hope to get answers to as soon as possible. As you know, we have a very tight timeline for completion of this work. We request written responses to the following questions.

There are two sets of data that we want to confirm variations from:

1. For the weights derived from the district-level model, we're interested in understanding the impact of the following variations from the table on page 59 of the report:
 - Replace the recommended pupil weight for English language learners with a targeted categorical aid program and remove the associated weights
 - Calculate equalized pupils with additive pupil weights rather than multiplicative pupil weights for students in poverty and enrollment; and
 - Use free- or reduced-price lunch eligibility as the measure of students in poverty rather than enrollment in for nutrition benefits.

Since you have testified that the pupil weights estimated for selected cost factors are dependent on the model from which they are derived, including both the underlying data and the cost factors included in the estimation, what changes would the Task Force need to make to the pupil weights recommended in your report to account for these variations?

2. The second set of findings we're trying to understand better are the results from the district-level cost-function model presented in Table A.1. of the Report.

Can the estimated cost associated with students in poverty in Table A.1. be applied to the number of students eligible for the free- or reduced-price lunch program or to the number of students enrolled in SNAP nutrition benefits (the measure used in our current equalized pupil calculation)? If the application varies, do the estimated costs vary as well?

For other included cost factors, we are tentatively using the following estimates derived from the district-level cost-function model:

- Poverty \$5,531
- High School \$6,716
- Middle School \$2,023
- Population Density 1 \$1,384
- Pop. Density 2 and 3 \$700

Would you let us know if these cost estimates should be changed to be consistent with the Report findings and if so, how?

More generally, would you explain why there is such a large difference between the pupil weights derived from the district- and school-level models? How can such divergent results both be explained in common language to legislators, advocates, and the general public?

Finally, assuming we apply the special education census grant to Average Daily Membership unweighted by the number of equalized pupils or the number of poverty-weighted pupil, as called for in Act 173, should we use the pupil weights that control for students with disabilities or the pupil weights that do not control for students with disabilities? We think there is some miscommunication between us on this last point as we seem to have emails from you that say both things.

The meeting of the Task Force that had been scheduled for Wednesday has been postponed until next Friday, October 29th. We plan to present our preliminary recommendations and results to the Task Force at that meeting. To facilitate that meeting we would appreciate it if you would answer our questions in writing in a timely manner. We understand that you, like the two of us have a full life with many responsibilities, so if you are unable to respond, please let us know as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

Senator Ruth Hardy and Representative Emilie Kornheiser, Co-Chairs