Subject: Proposed District Map Forces Waterford Students to Travel Past Their Local High School

Mon 2/16/2026 9:11 AM

Dear Senate Education Committee,

I am writing as a constituent and parent in Waterford, Caledonia County, deeply concerned about the proposed district map introduced on February 5 in the House Education Committee by Representative Conlon. As written, it removes Waterford students' high school choice and their access to St. Johnsbury Academy, the local high school of our community for generations.

For decades, the majority of Waterford students have attended St. Johnsbury Academy as our nearest high school. Parents, grandparents, and neighbors walked its halls. My own son should be able to attend the same school his father did. Like many families in town, we bought land and built our home in Waterford specifically because of this longstanding educational access.

Our students are succeeding, families are satisfied, and our community is strong. This is not a system in need of repair.

St. Johnsbury Academy is not a new or experimental institution. For towns like Waterford, it has long served as the de facto public high school and is woven into the fabric of life in the Northeast Kingdom. In a region that is often overlooked, it has been a lifeline — providing high-quality education and real opportunity. Removing access would dismantle something that works.

The practical consequences are impossible to ignore. St. Johnsbury Academy is our closest high school, by far. The February 5 proposal would require families to drive directly past St. Johnsbury and travel roughly 30 additional minutes round-trip to attend school in Danville or even further. Our students would literally pass the doors of the school that has educated Waterford children for decades, only to travel miles farther away. That cannot be what "improving education" looks like.

Whatever broader reforms are under consideration, this particular arrangement is not broken. I urge you to carefully consider what is being dismantled. This is more than a line on a map, it is stability and opportunity for our children.

If this change was an oversight, I respectfully ask that it be corrected. If it was intentional, I urge you to reconsider and reinstate school choice access to St. Johnsbury Academy for Waterford families.

Subjecting the NEK -- an already under-resourced part of our state -- to the uncertainty and disruption of this proposal is deeply frustrating and feels dismissive of our community's realities.

Please do not force our children to lose access to the school that has long been part of our town's identity and is the reason many of us have chosen to raise our children here. This must be fixed.

Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration.

Sincerely,
Caitlin Fitzwater
Waterford, Vermont
Homeowner and Parent of a 3rd Grader