Subject: February 5 Map Disproportionately Harms Waterford and the Northeast Kingdom

Thu 2/19/2026 4:00 PM

Dear Education Committee Members and interested parties,

I am writing regarding the February 5 district map proposal and its impact on Waterford families in Caledonia County. I am writing this email as a concerned parent, long standing citizen of Vermont's Northeast Kingdom and former alumni of the St. Johnsbury Academy.

For decades, Waterford families have relied on St. Johnsbury Academy as their primary high school. This is a time-tested, deeply rooted model that has successfully served generations of students in the Northeast Kingdom. The school is woven into the civic, economic, and cultural life of our region.

I don't think many surrounding towns outside of the NEK know just how rural we really are. Our town and school have been without bus transportation for almost two months. Although, this doesn't concern anyone other than who it directly impacts, parents are having to take time from work and use annual or sick time to transport their children to and from school. Car pooling isn't always an option when you live as rural as we do. Stressed parents lead to stressed children. We all know that long term exposure of stress on children can lead to health issues down the road which bring us to, extra strain on state funded programs like Dr. Dinosaur etc.

As drafted, the map would remove that access and require students to travel significantly farther away for high school, although it is located only minutes from us. Some of the proposed schools are upwards of 45 minutes away. With the State and towns current salt shortage, the states cost of road maintenance would greatly increase. How are parents expected to ensure the safe travel of their children to and from schools when the roads cannot be maintained?

It is deeply troubling that a proposal would disrupt a system that is working, particularly in the Northeast Kingdom, a region that is already under-resourced and too often overlooked in statewide decision-making. Requiring students to bypass their nearest high school and commute significantly farther away takes away opportunities for our region’s young people, places unnecessary strain on families, and signals a massive disregard for rural communities.

Education reform should strengthen regions like ours, not destabilize them. We respectfully urge you to reconsider this proposal and ensure that Waterford families maintain access to the high school that has long served our community.

Sincerely,

Celia M. Deterling

Waterford, Vermont