

Dear Members of the Committee,

I am writing to express my opposition to Act 73 and, in particular, to the unrealistic assumptions being made about what this law can financially accomplish.

Governor Scott has stated that Act 73 will allow Vermont to raise teacher salaries while also funding expanded programming and other costly initiatives. I do not see how this is fiscally plausible. Vermont's student population is declining, education spending is already rising faster than household incomes, and property taxpayers are stretched to their limits. Structural reorganization alone does not create new money.

Consolidation does not magically produce savings large enough to offset:

- Meaningful increases in teacher salaries
- Expanded services and programs
- Transition and implementation costs
- Transportation, administrative, and staffing disruptions

In many cases, consolidation actually increases costs in the short- and medium-term, while eroding local accountability and destabilizing schools that are currently functioning well. Promising higher salaries and expanded offerings without a credible, transparent funding plan risks misleading Vermonters and setting districts up for failure.

I am especially concerned that Act 73 appears to treat local schools as financial problems to be solved rather than community assets to be strengthened. Small and rural schools already operate efficiently out of necessity. Removing local governance and forcing larger systems does not change the underlying math—it only shifts decision-making farther from families and taxpayers.

Before moving forward with Act 73, I urge you to:

- Clearly demonstrate where the promised funding will come from
- Acknowledge the real costs and risks of consolidation
- Reconsider one-size-fits-all solutions for diverse communities
- Protect local schools that are academically strong and fiscally responsible

Vermonters deserve honesty about what education reform can and cannot realistically deliver. Act 73, as presented, overpromises savings and outcomes that are not supported by evidence.

Thank you for your time and for considering the real impacts this legislation will have on students, educators, and communities across Vermont.

Sincerely,
Erin Cembrola
Westford