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

Tue 2/17/2026 10:21 AM

Representative Beck & the School District Redistricting Task Force,

I am writing as a constituent and parent in Waterford, Caledonia County, regarding the proposed district map under Act 73.

As proposed, the map removes Waterford's long-standing high school choice and access to St. Johnsbury Academy. That is not a minor adjustment, it is a structural shift with significant implications for families in our town and across the Northeast Kingdom.

For generations, the majority of Waterford students have attended St. Johnsbury Academy as our nearest high school. It has functioned as the de facto public high school for our town and is woven into the identity and stability of this community. Families have chosen to live here because of that continuity. Our students are succeeding. This is not a failing system in need of dismantling.

In fact, in recent years Waterford and other surrounding towns with school choice have seen an increase in families with young children moving into our community specifically because of our elementary school and access to St. Johnsbury Academy. Has this demographic shift been considered in the Task Force's analysis? We cannot be the only small town in the NEK experiencing this trend.

The February 5 proposal would require Waterford students to bypass the doors of St. Johnsbury Academy, the closest high school to our town, and travel significantly farther to Danville. I would like to review the transportation time studies, cost modeling, and participation impact assessments that support this decision.

Vermont frequently cites concerns about an aging demographic and population decline. I am aware that this an alarming trend, I see and deal with daily as a small business owner in Vermont. But what analysis has been conducted to determine whether removing school choice in rural communities supports reversing that trend? Has the Task Force concluded that restructuring or eliminating a relatively new educational model will attract young families to Vermont? From our vantage point in Waterford, the effect would likely be the opposite.

More broadly, I am requesting documentation regarding:

- Property value implications in towns losing school choice
- Enrollment and housing market impact modeling
- Economic sustainability assessments for rural communities

- Criteria and weighting used in district grouping decisions, and specifically how Waterford's inclusion was determined

If such studies exist, please provide them. If they do not, that absence should be acknowledged.

Additionally, I am requesting specific fiscal transparency regarding education funding:

- Vermont Lottery profits are described as earmarked for education.
- Where specifically are those net profits transferred?
- In which public report can citizens verify annual transfer amounts?
- Where can residents see Education Fund inflows and allocations clearly itemized?
- Vermont Cannabis tax revenues are also described as dedicated to education.
- What portion of the sales and excise taxes flow to the Education Fund versus other funds?
- Where are those receipts and allocations publicly reported in a clear, consolidated format?

Please provide the exact report names and their public locations.

Vermont is not only Burlington, Rutland, or Montpelier. Rural communities in the NEK deserve policy decisions grounded in data, transparency, and an understanding of how these changes affect housing stability, community viability, and long-term growth.

This is not simply a line on a map. It affects where children are educated, how far they travel, whether families choose to move here, and whether communities remain sustainable.

I respectfully request a written response addressing the above questions with supporting documentation.

Sincerely,
Kimberly McBey
Waterford, Vermont