

September 6, 2024

**PUBLIC COMMENT AND RECOMMENDATIONS  
TO COMMISSION ON THE FUTURE OF PUBLIC EDUCATION IN VERMONT**

Dear Commission Chair Roy and Members:

On behalf of all of us who have signed this letter to serve as public comment and recommendations concerning the work of the Commission on the Future of Public Education in Vermont, we again restate the recommendations that many of us submitted to you on July 22, as we see limited progress in most areas.

Those recommendations are as follows:

1. **Conduct a statewide listening tour.** It is an essential element of the work. Do this before you make any recommendations. Include small towns, not just large population centers, for meeting locations.

We appreciate discussion of this recommendation and hope a comprehensive plan emerges from this work.

2. **Define the terms and criteria you are using from the start.** What does equity mean? What is a small school? What criteria will you use to evaluate efficiency, effectiveness, and positive outcomes? Defining terminology and criteria has not been addressed by the commission and is fundamental to your work.

3. **Engage independent evaluators to assess the effectiveness and outcomes associated with the implementation of relevant law, including Act 46.** The evaluation should be comprehensive and conducted by a research team, not a consultant. It should be a thorough and independent evaluation of how the law worked—and didn't—in the real world. Did the law meet its goals? Were there really cost savings and positive educational outcomes? What harms were caused?

We are deeply concerned about comments made at the most recent meeting of the full commission concerning Recommendation 3. There is no progress we can see in this area. The law that created this Commission requires review and consideration of existing educational laws, policy, and legislative reports. The law specifically cited review and consideration, at a minimum, of Acts 46, 173, 127 and 76. Specific to Act 46, it is not accurate to suggest that the evaluation of the impacts of Act 46 has been conducted, and all that is necessary is to read currently available reports. The last legislative report was submitted in 2019 and further reports required in 2020 and 2021 have not materialized. No comprehensive external analysis of Act 46 has, therefore, taken place. We are fast approaching 2025, the 10-year anniversary of its passage. We believe that an independent evaluation of the outcomes of implementation of Act 46 is not only overdue but is an essential part of fulfilling the purposes of this Commission's work. Little of value will come from a new vision built upon a foundation of anecdote and opinion. As several of the Commission members have said, you want to be standing on evidence, not bias, in making your recommendations. Filling the gaps where objective evaluation has not been conducted is part of the work of this Commission.

4. **Engage and communicate with the public.** How will information be solicited from every school and community in the state? What format can be used in every town to solicit the kind of information the commission needs? How can technology be used effectively to gather input?

We are pleased to see that a subcommittee has been formed and has begun work on a plan to engage the public. The process should involve active listening and authentic engagement.

5. **Evaluate strengths as well as weaknesses.** What do Vermonters see as the strengths of our public education system? How do we recommend changes that build on our strengths as a state and not undermine them?

Evaluation of strengths as well as weaknesses has not been addressed.

We appreciate the thoughtful approach you are taking to the work of the Commission. Thank you for your consideration of our recommendations.

Respectfully,

**Liz Adams**, Putney, Former WSESD & WSESU Board member (2020 - 2023)

**Jeanne Albert**, Ph.D., Lincoln, Chair, Lincoln School District Board

**Polly Allen**, Craftsbury, Public School Parent

**Anne Beekman**, Putney, Chair, Windham Southeast Supervisory Union

**Jack Bryar** Former Chair, WNESU, Former Chair Athens/Grafton School District (WNUESD), Previously, Chair Athens/Grafton/Westminster School District (WNUESD), Previously, Chair Athens/Grafton Joint Contract Board and Chair Grafton School Board

**Patrick Cartee**, Irasburg, Selectboard Member

**Cheryl Charles**, Ph.D., Chair, Westminster Town School Board; Chair, Windham Northeast Supervisory Union Board of School Directors

**Nancy Cornell**, Starksboro, Editor and Publisher of *Vermont Learning*

**Catherine Coteus**, Worcester

**Steve Coteus**, Worcester

**Millard Cox**, Ripton, Retired Vermont Public School Educator

**Jay Denault**, Franklin, retired MVU school board Chair

**Michael Duane**, East Montpelier

**John Freitag**, South Strafford Vermont, Newton Elementary School Facilities Manager for 34 years (retired)

**Allen Gilbert**, Worcester, former chair of the Worcester School board and of the Washington Central Supervisory Union Board, and a former president of the Vermont School Boards Association

**Merri Greenia**, Retired Principal from Craftsbury and Wolcott, Vermont Elementary Principal of the Year 2021, National Distinguished Principal 2021

**Anne Hanson**, Craftsbury, Volunteer and educator

**Caitlin Howansky**, Worcester

**Suzanne Hull-Casavant**, Enosburg

**Diane Janukajtis**, Stannard

**Bill Jesdale**, Lincoln

**Dave Lahar**, Irasburg, Selectboard Member

**Dan MacArthur**, Marlboro, Chair, Marlboro School Board

**Timothy Maciel**, Ed.D., Brattleboro, WSESD/SU school board director

**Margaret MacLean**, Peacham, Executive Director Vermont Rural Education Collaborative (Retired), Employee Rural School and Community Trust (Retired), Former member of the Vermont State Board of Education

**Susan Meggiolaro**, Dummerston, Former Dummerston Town School Board Clerk

**Anne Morse**, Craftsbury, former school board member

**Ray Mullineaux**, North Bennington Graded School District Prudential Committee Chairperson, SVSU board member

**Jody Normandeau**, Dummerston, Past school board member and board chair

**Herb Olson**, Starksboro

**Carin Ewing Park**, Barnard, Mountain Views School District Board

**Stacey Peters**, Chair, Granville-Hancock Unified District Board of School Directors

**Mike Prue**, Irasburg, Selectboard Member

**Eileen Riley**, Marshfield, Retired Teacher

**Mary Lou Rylands-Isaacson**, former Craftsbury School Board member

**David Schoales**, Brattleboro, Windham Southeast Supervisory Union 2008-2022

**Marty Strange**, Randolph

**C. Scott Thompson**, Calais, Former school board member (and two-time chair) for Calais, U-32, Washington Central UUSD (2008-2022)

**Randal Vaughn**, Barnard, producer, cnuz.tv

**Dell Waterhouse**, Worcester, retired teacher at Doty Memorial School, Worcester