



To: Meagan Roy, Chair, Commission on the Future of Public Education in Vermont

From: Elizabeth Jennings, VASBO Representative
Nicole Mace, VSBA Representative
Mike Leichter, VSA Representative
Heather Bushey, VASBO President
Flor Diaz Smith, VSBA President
Amy Minor, VSA President

Re: Data Request to Inform Recommendations

Date: November 1, 2024

According to section f(2) of Act 183, the Commission is responsible for submitting “a written report containing its preliminary findings and recommendations, including short-term cost containment considerations for the 2025 legislative session, on or before December 15, 2024.”

In order to complete its work to meet this deadline, the Commission must have current, relevant and accurate data. On August 5, the Steering Group identified a [data framework and request](#) which included a list of the information necessary to begin the Commission’s work. To date, the Agency of Education has not provided the requested data.

On Monday, October 28, the Agency of Education provided a data presentation to the Commission’s Education Finance Subcommittee. The content of that presentation was the same information presented at the August 26 meeting of the Commission and the same information being presented at the Agency’s Listen and Learn Tour meetings. This data is not responsive to the Commission’s August 5 data framework.

According to section 1(g) of Act 183 (2024), the Agency of Education must “provide the educational and financial data necessary to facilitate the work of the Commission.” This Commission requires more in depth and comprehensive data than the types of data being utilized to inform the Agency’s Listen and Learn Tour.

In the Listen & Learn data presented, it is not possible to differentiate between different SD/SU delivery models. For example, the cost of a school system that is only responsible for K-8 must be analyzed in a different manner than costs of a school system that is responsible for K-12 education. Additionally, the data presented analyzes student counts by enrollment rather than average daily membership (ADM). ADM captures the full expenses a district is responsible for, regardless of whether it tuitions students or serves them within its own public schools. (See <https://education.vermont.gov/sites/aoe/files/documents/edu-governance-guidance-adm-versus-enrollment.pdf> for more information).

It should be noted again that the “statewide total expenditures per pupil (total enrollment)” on page 16 of the Vermont State Education Profile includes federal pandemic funding. It is unclear whether or not other federal money like Title funds are also included. Since Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) money was one-time funding related to COVID-19 for very specific purposes it needs to be viewed in a different context. It is also unclear from the description if all publicly funded Vermont students along with the associated tuition costs or just Vermont public school students are included in the calculation. Finally, the report does not accurately reflect what expenditures are included in the Education Fund only, since it includes all federal, state and local expenditures.

In both Finance Committee and full Commission meetings we regularly requested detailed information about how education funds are being raised and spent in a manner that contributes to high property tax burdens. We believe this information is necessary to meet the December 15 deadline to make recommendations including short-term cost containment. However, the data have not been provided. This memo is intended to codify multiple requests for the Agency to provide the following specific data to inform the December 15, 2024 interim report:

- Breakdown of \$1.89 billion education payment by object and function using district budget information.
- Education Fund sources & uses 2014-2024
 - a. Education payment
 - b. Legislative programs
 - i. Universal Meals
 - ii. PCBs
 - iii. Tech Education
 - iv. Early Education
 - v. Flexible Pathways (early college, dual enrollment, adult education)
 - vi. Other
 - c. Transportation payment
 - d. Homestead Tax net of Property Tax Credit
 - i. Nonresidential Tax
 - ii. Sales, Purchase & Use, Rooms & Meals Tax
 - iii. Medicaid
 - e. Special education payment

- f. Tuition Expenses
 - i. Number of districts paying tuition 2014-2024
 - ii. Total amount paid to independent schools
 - iii. Amount paid to out-of-state schools
 - iv. Amount paid to religious schools
 - v. Amount paid to special education out-of-district placements

VASBO leadership has been working closely with the Agency of Education to set the correct criteria for the data the Commission has requested, which is different from the data released previously. VSA would welcome the opportunity to join this collaborative effort to ensure that the data presented to the Commission and the public is as accurate as possible.

Current, relevant and accurate data is critical to the completion of the Commission's duties, including its written report due by December 15, 2024 containing preliminary findings and recommendations, along with short-term cost containment considerations for the 2025 legislative session.

Cc: Zoie Saunders, Interim Secretary of Education