



To: State Board of Education
From: Sue Ceglowski, Executive Director, Vermont School Boards Association
Re: Public Comment on Agenda Item R
Date: September 18, 2024

Good morning. My name is Sue Ceglowski and I am the Executive Director of the Vermont School Boards Association. I am here this morning to provide public comment on agenda item R (Reflections from the 2024 State Board of Education Retreat).

First, we commend the State Board for holding a retreat and spending time on the important topics of board norms and standard operating procedures. The way the State Board of Education conducts its business is crucial and can significantly impact its effectiveness, transparency, and public trust. As the state level board addressing education, this Board should serve as a model for good governance.

The work that began at the State Board retreat should continue. In a [memorandum to the Roles and Responsibilities Committee dated September 11, 2024](#), the Chair responded to the concerns raised at the retreat and asserted that no members of the public have raised concerns about how the Board performs its work. This is not true; the VSBA and other education associations have communicated with the Board several times over the past several months on that very topic.

On August 4, 2023, the VSBA provided [public comment](#) to the Board's Rule 2200 Committee, expressing concerns about the misnaming of committee meetings on the website, approval of minutes that didn't comply with the Open Meeting Law, and motions to enter executive session that didn't comply with the Open Meeting Law.

On August 16, 2023, the VSBA, along with other education associations, provided [public comment](#) to the Board on the proposed changes to the Rule 2200 series. We stated "In sum, we are concerned that the process of the proposed amendments to the 2200 Rules lacks transparency and accountability. We believe that the State Board must operate in compliance with the most basic transparency and accountability expectations so that Vermonters can fairly participate and bear witness to the State Board actions."

On September 6, 2023, Vermont Superintendents Association Executive Director Jeff Francis sent an email to the State Board's Secretary Search Committee following up on his September 1 public comments to the committee. His comments focused on lack of accessibility to the committee's meeting which the public could only access by telephone. A committee member was sharing their screen in the Microsoft Teams meeting and committee members could see it (and the changes that were being made to the document) while the public could only listen via phone, making it impossible for the public to follow the changes being made to the document.

Another example of concerns raised about how the Board performs its work is a VSBA Resolution passed last October which requires "that VSBA convene a task force to assess concerns regarding and failures of the State Board of Education and/or the Agency of Education, and thereafter provide to the Governor and the legislature no later than January 2025 a list of recommended actions they should take in order to provide appropriate support toward the education of Vermont's students. This task force may include support from groups such as the Vermont Superintendents Association, the Vermont Principals Association, the Vermont Council of Special Education Administrators, and the Vermont Business Managers Association." The task force called for in the resolution has completed its work and its report will be issued in October.

There are other examples of concerns we have raised about how this Board performs its work, but I don't have time to cover them here. I will conclude by emphasizing the importance of board norms and protocols as well as transparency in the Board's work. Please continue to work on improving the State Board's norms, protocols and transparency so that you become a model for good governance. The state's students are counting on you.

Thank you.