

August 26, 2025

Dear Members of the Vermont School District Redistricting Task Force,

As business officials with over 170 years of combined experience across over 80 towns, we write to urge the adoption of a more effective governance model for Vermont's schools. Collectively, we serve more than 15,000 students, over 20% of Vermont's children. Based on our experience, we believe a unified district structure will deliver greater efficiency, cost-effectiveness, and transparency, benefiting both students and taxpayers.

Some of us currently work in Supervisory Unions (SUs), while others have worked in SUs in the past, and through earlier mergers or switching jobs, are now in School Districts. All of us have firsthand knowledge of the inefficiencies of the SU model. Our concerns are shared by colleagues who cannot speak publicly due to employment or board pressures.

### **Inefficient Operations**

The SU structure adds unnecessary layers of governance. Multiple boards and administrative teams slow decision-making, duplicate discussions, and create inconsistent policies. From a finance perspective, our staff must manage separate accounting systems, payrolls, and reports for each member district, compounding workload and fragmenting accountability. SUs also face structural constraints: for example, they cannot own buildings or borrow money. They are required to provide transportation but cannot own a bus garage. They must provide special education services but cannot own a building to house an alternative program.

### **Lack of Cost Savings**

While SUs are promoted as vehicles for resource-sharing, the reality is otherwise. Redundant staffing, conflicting contracts, and fragmented services undermine economies of scale. Managing multiple budgets, audits, and reporting cycles only increases administrative overhead and costs.

### **Weak Accountability and Transparency**

The SU model diffuses responsibility across multiple boards, eroding public trust. Budgets are approved by the SU board and appear only as a single line item in local budgets, obscuring true spending and limiting taxpayer oversight.

### **Our Recommendation**

We urge the Task Force to focus on district size (both student count and geography) in its redistricting plan, and to make clear that retaining the SU structure will prevent Act 73 from achieving its goals of saving money and expanding opportunity. If SUs remain, Vermont will continue to suffer from:

- Multiple layers of governance
- Lack of taxpayer accountability
- Failure to realize economies of scale
- Inconsistent policies and opportunities

The only “benefits” of SUs are the preservation of numerous small boards and continued public funding of private schools. If those are legislative priorities, they can be addressed separately—without burdening new, larger districts with an outdated governance structure.

Act 73 represents a difficult transition, but also a chance to eliminate obsolete systems and modernize Vermont’s schools. Thank you for your consideration. We are available to provide further data, case studies, and firsthand accounts.

Sincerely,

**Morgan Daybell**, CFO, Franklin Northeast Supervisory Union

**Michelle Baker**, Director of Finance, Lamoille South Supervisory Union

Former Director of Operations and Finance, Harwood Unified Union School District  
(formerly Washington West Supervisory Union)

**Annie Houston**, Director of Finance, Orleans Southwest Supervisory Union

**Elizabeth Jennings**, Senior Accounting Manager, South Burlington School District;

Former Business Manager, Addison Northwest School District (formerly  
Addison-Northwest Supervisory Union)

Former Accounting Manager, Burlington School District and Addison Northeast  
Supervisory Union (now Mount Abraham Unified School District)

**Randall Morton**, Business Manager, Franklin West Supervisory Union;

Former Business Manager, Battenkill Valley Supervisory Union

Former Assistant Business Manager, Windham Central Supervisory Union

**Rick Pembroke**, CFO, Springfield School District;

Former Business Manager, Southwest Vermont Supervisory Union and Orleans  
Southwest Supervisory Union

**Lisa Perrault**, Business Manager, Barre Unified Union School District (formerly Barre  
Supervisory Union)

**Frank Rucker**, Business Administrator, Windham Southeast Supervisory Union;

Former Business Administrator, Windham Central Supervisory Union

**Cheryl Scarzello**, Director of Finance, Slate Valley Unified Union School District (formerly  
Addison-Rutland Supervisory Union);

Former Business Manager, Rutland Central Supervisory Union

**Sue Wilborn**, Director of Finance & Business, Bennington-Rutland Supervisory Union