



TO: School District Redistricting Task Force

FROM: Sue Ceglowski, Executive Director, Vermont School Boards Association

RE: Public Comments at First Task Force Meeting

DATE: August 1, 2025

Good morning. My name is Sue Ceglowski. I'm the Executive Director for the Vermont School Boards Association, and I appreciate the chance to speak with you today.

Vermont's education system is undergoing significant transformation, and the proposals made by this Task Force will have a lasting impact on our children, our communities, and the future of our state. We urge you to approach your work with a deep moral commitment to fairness, equity, and the responsible stewardship of public dollars.

Please carefully consider the process you will use to ensure transparency and robust public engagement. Public education is a cornerstone of democracy. It is funded by all Vermonters, and decisions that shape its future must be made with the utmost integrity, accountability, neutrality and a genuine commitment to the public good.

According to Act 73 (2025), this Task Force must study and consider different configurations for school district consolidation and propose not more than three options for new school district boundaries. The Act states that "Proposed new school districts or supervisory unions and supervisory districts shall have, *to the extent practical*, an average daily membership of not fewer than *approximately* 4,000 and not more than 8,000 prekindergarten through grade 12 students." (emphasis added).

The district sizes in the Act (4,000-8,000 students) are not informed by research and are not based on data. The words "to the extent practical" and "approximately" provide flexibility for this Task Force to propose governance units that have an average daily membership of less than 4,000 students. We encourage you to utilize this flexibility to the maximum extent possible so that the three options you propose are research based and reflect the context of Vermont's communities.

The [Iowa Lighthouse Study](#) on school board leadership demonstrated that boards with a strong commitment to community engagement are more likely to have high achieving districts. These

boards could provide specific examples of outreach efforts and actively promoted involvement. Staff in these districts described the boards as supportive and respectful, noting that board members listened to their concerns and valued their input. One key strategy was to hold post-board meetings to brief teachers and administrators on policy decisions.

By comparison, school boards in lower-performing districts frequently cited challenges in communication and outreach. They often attributed low parent involvement to a lack of interest, yet they could identify only limited efforts to foster engagement. Many board members expressed frustration with the community's lack of participation but believed there was little they could do to change it. Within the district, staff members from these lower-performing schools often reported little to no interaction with their board members.

Please consider the size of the districts you are proposing through the lens of the new school board's ability to engage meaningfully with all of the communities within the district. Research shows this is a critical component for student outcomes in the future school districts.

The work of the task force should reflect a commitment to local relevance and working toward a future where public education thrives for all. We must empower school districts to deliver education that aligns with their local context.

We would be remiss if we did not highlight the changes at the federal level that are creating chaos for public education throughout the nation. As you carry out your work, please do so in a way that supports stability here in Vermont. Ultimately, your work should be focused on providing high quality public education to the students of our state.

It's also important for this Task Force to understand any capacity issues at the Agency that would impact its ability to support consolidation of school districts. Please review this [VSBA Report of the Task Force on Collaboration to Benefit All Students](#) for more information on challenges in Vermont's public education system, particularly the ability of the Agency to meet its statutory responsibilities and maintain accurate data.

The VSBA stands ready to assist the Task Force by providing information and gathering information/feedback from our members. We plan to utilize our regional meetings this fall to inform our members on the work of the Task Force and gather valuable information from them to submit to this Task Force.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide public comment today.