

**Preliminary Findings of the
Commission on the Future of Public Education in Vermont**

December 15, 2024

- I. Legislation:** This report is submitted by the Commission pursuant to [Act 183 of 2024 Sec. \(f\)\(2\)](#) to the General Assembly as “a written report containing its preliminary findings and recommendations, including short-term cost containment considerations for the 2025 legislative session.”
- II. Background:** Overview of Act 183 and Commission’s approach
 - A. Charge of the Commission (including three policy consideration areas)
 - B. Membership
 - C. Organization of the Work (meeting schedule & structure; workplan framework; communication & engagement framework)
 - D. Guiding principles - the report should clearly identify the Commission’s strong stance around equity
- III. Preliminary Findings (AS BRAINSTORMED IN 10/21 MEETING - FOR DISCUSSION PURPOSES)**
 - A. This preliminary report should serve as a call to action for budget development and the general public, understanding that the process of large-scale change to our system will take more time than provided for the scope of this report
 1. Acknowledge the property tax burden and its impact on the affordability of Vermont - empathy for this issue
 - B. Identifying the context of Vermont funding - the “problem statement”. To include a high level identification of cost drivers and the extent these drivers are within or outside of the control of local budget decisions:
 1. Connection of our education funding challenge to other Vermont affordability issues (housing, etc)
 2. Report on some data trends (enrollment, personnel ratios, class size, etc)
 3. Healthcare and personnel costs as it relates to delivery models
 4. School Construction
 5. Tuition to independent schools
 6. Special education
 - C. Acknowledge the challenge of the timeline
 - D. Preview larger scale changes that will need to occur but are not included in this report (funding formula change)
 - E. Description of how Vermont’s funding system compares to other states
 - F. Identify the Commission’s use of data to validate or challenge assumptions
 - G. Identify education fund uses that are outside of the day to day operations of public schools
 - H. The interconnected nature of each of the three policy areas, and identifying that change will need to occur in all three

PRELIMINARY DRAFT OUTLINE - FOR COMMISSION DISCUSSION PURPOSES ONLY

- I. Convene longer term analysis of recent legislation (46/173/127)
- J. Make clear that the goal of the report is to put actionable ideas in front of the general assembly and concrete targets/guidance to the field

IV. Short-Term Cost Containment Strategies (AS BRAINSTORMED IN 10/21 MEETING - FOR DISCUSSION PURPOSES)

- A. Overview of the process by which the Commission generated this list, including a definition of what the Commission intends by “cost containment” (e.g., reducing costs or reducing taxes/shifting costs). Understand that anything presented in this report, even if not identified as a formal recommendation, will inform districts, Boards and communities
- B. Remove non-educational expenses from the Education Fund
 - 1. Universal school meals, mental health and other “public health” costs
 - 2. Teachers retirement
 - 3. Dual enrollment
 - 4. Support for private PreK programs that do not have licensed educators
- C. Inact tuition caps for public tuition to independent schools (match the funding to the Average Announced Tuition) with an exception for private therapeutic placements determined by IEP teams
- D. Require independent schools receiving public dollars to comply with the same regulatory processes/requirements as public schools
- E. Moratorium on public tuition dollars going out of state, with an exception for private therapeutic placements determined by IEP teams
- F. Revise the non-homestead tax calculation: Ensure that non-homestead tax rates are not lower than homestead rates; change classifications so this applies to second homeowners and not small businesses
- G. Tie the excess spending threshold to cost drivers (personnel, facilities, tuition)
- H. Jumpstart the BOCES processes but be aware that we are not creating additional bureaucracies (e.g., larger districts with scale can achieve the same outcomes as a separate BOCES structure with its own governance)
- I. Thoughtful recommendations about achieving scale (staffing levels; minimum class sizes with rurality exceptions)
- J. Provide statewide curriculum resources to decrease local duplicative costs
- K. Address potential incentives in the current funding formula
- L. Reference based pricing
- M. Allowable growth/excess spending targets, applicable to both public and independent schools receiving public dollars
- N. Requirement for a supermajority vote by Boards who are exceeding the threshold, with a waiver or review mechanism for exceptions
- O. Develop a waiver or review mechanism for districts to opt out of unfunded mandates

Respectfully submitted on behalf of the Commission by:

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Chair

DRAFT - DISCUSSION ONLY