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From: **Renee Hinton** <rhinton@wrvsu.org>

Date: Tue, Jul 9, 2024 at 5:57 AM

Subject: Response to Act 76 Committee

To: Rebecca Webb <rwebbbsu@buusd.org>

CC: Renee Hinton <rhinton@wrvsu.org>

Dear Committee Members,

Thank you for this opportunity to write to you about this topic.

I would like to give you a little background information. I work for the White River Valley Supervisory Union. Within our SU, we have 6 School Districts: First Branch Unified District (FBUD), which serves Chelsea and Tunbridge; Strafford School District (The Newton School); Sharon School District; White River Unified District (WRUD), which serves Royalton and Bethel; Rochester Stockbridge Unified District (RSUD), which serves Rochester and Stockbridge; and Granville Hancock Unified District (GHUD), which represents Granville and Hancock. These School Districts represent 10 towns. One district's voters (GHUD) have chosen to close their schools and tuition all of their students out to other schools. We have 8 schools plus a high school. Of these 8 schools, 6 have the capacity (in physical space and staffing) to have PreK programs within their buildings. Some buildings have two PreK classrooms, which allows our Supervisory Union to have 10 PreK classrooms, all of which were full (holding 10-15 students per room, as licensing regulations allow according to space and ratio limits). Strafford rents part of their space to its PreK partner program (Strafford Creative Preschool) as there is no other space in town for a private preschool or child care to run. Two of our PreK programs offer aftercare every day after school until 5:00 PM for families and accept subsidy. The rest of our programs have been trying to hire in order to offer aftercare until 5:00 PM, but have had no applicants for the last 3 years.

We partnered with 15 programs at the beginning of the 23/24 school year. One of our partner programs had to stop partnering with us, because they lost their licensed teacher mid-way through the year and were unable to replace them, even with a 30 day waiver.

The proposed changes will impact our programs and communities in the following ways:

Make PreK available for the full school day and full school year for all 4 year olds. All 6 of our PreK programs currently offer this, as of the 23/24 School Year.

Remove all 3 year olds from PreK. If we remove all 3 year olds from PreK, we will have to close some of our classrooms, thereby putting teachers and support staff out of jobs. This will be devastating for our communities, as locally qualified people and families depend on these jobs. Adversely, our partner programs are already at capacity

(in space and staffing and enrollment of students) and have waiting lists for their programs. They will not have capacity to serve all of the three year olds that need care. Some families will choose to keep their 4 year olds with our partner programs, as they have the staff to maintain care from 7:00 AM to 5:00 PM. We have also recently had an influx of 3 year olds enter the public school system this year because their children were being sent home from care early due to behavioral issues at their child care placement. The child care staff were not equipped with strategies to support these children who exhibited challenging behavior. On top of this, if we only offer care to those 3 year olds who are on IEPs, will our classrooms really be inclusive classrooms?

Make school districts responsible for finding space to accommodate 4 year olds.

We currently do this. However, if the school is not a viable option for families and they do not have family members that are local to help them, this can be complicated. Our communities are settled near New Hampshire and many of our residents work there. As previously stated, our current partner programs are at capacity. Some of our families choose to homeschool their children. Will we be holding spaces open for students that may not ever attend, especially since PreK is not mandatory? Will our voters then choose to close our Preschool programs, thus affecting more staff and families within our communities? I am unsure, but these are questions that are raised in my mind.

Make school districts responsible for deciding if to partner with community-based programs and which programs to partner with. If partners are still required to adhere to UPK standards, then yes, we are happy to partner with community-based programs. If there will be no indication of high quality programming, it can prove difficult to persuade voters to partner with programs (as they vote on our budget to tuition students out).

Thank you for your time. Please reach out with any question you have.

Sincerely,
Renee' Hinton

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Resources:

[24/25 PreK Registration Packet](#)