

September 3, 2021

Re: Assignment of Ripton School District for Supervisory Union Services

To: Secretary French

From: Ripton School District board

On August 25, you communicated your inclination to recommend to the State Board of Education that they declare Ripton to be its own SD pursuant to 16 V.S.A. § 261(c). While we completely understand the struggle with the three options, we believe we are in our statutory right to express concerns, as we are clearly not “large enough to support the planning and administrative functions of a supervisory union,” 16 V.S.A § 261 (c). When we asked for your perspective regarding the benefits and disadvantages of that recommendation, you provided the following rationale: “I am not interested in disrupting the work of neighboring districts by assigning a new district to their organizations.” We agree- reassignment to a neighboring supervisory union such as White River Valley or Rutland Northeast would be a true imposition; however, we believe there are practical and creative solutions that involve maintaining a *progressive* relationship with Addison Central School District.

ACSD has institutional knowledge and a long history of working with Ripton; moreover, it serves all of Ripton’s 6-12 students. We believe it would be a modest amount of additional remunerable work for ACSD to continue their SU services for the students of Ripton and expect that politics should not disqualify this from being a viable option. Furthermore, this disinclination, while clearly expressed by Superintendent Burrows, is not unanimously supported by the ACSD board. We suggest that this assignment need not be a permanent one but rather scaffolds the transition to the ultimate goal of including Ripton in a new non-contiguous SU that could work to support other small single-town districts.

To be clear, a lot of our understanding of the potential SU options for Ripton hinged on the communication we received from the AOE’s legal council. In that communication it was stated: “We are unable to imagine a scenario in which the State Board of Education would declare Ripton School District to be its own supervisory union under 16 V.S.A. § 261(c)” and, “It is unlikely that the State Board would designate a Ripton School District to be its own Supervisory District (single-district SU) because of the district’s small size.”

At this point, because of our small size, the heavy lift of hiring for SU services from scratch, and the tight timeframe to be operational, we cannot support Ripton being its own SD for the 2022-2023 academic year.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

The Ripton School District Board