

My name is Alyssa Chen and I am a former public school educator and current co-coordinator at the Education Justice Coalition of Vermont. I was so excited to see that the updated EQS standards passed at the state board level in May of last year.

I'm here to ask you to keep the definition of discrimination as it was initially voted by the state board. This definition creates more clarity and also includes a bigger class of students. For example, the new definition includes caste and socioeconomic status. This language would ensure that students from low income backgrounds can access all services at school and also protect them from being bullied about their socioeconomic status. Oftentimes low income students are left out of field trips or burdened to attend because of financial background. In 2022 Thirty-seven qualified as free and reduced lunch in Vermont and we need to ensure these students access things like field trips and proficiency based learning opportunities.

I have heard that EQS is going through a rulemaking process and some are trying to advocate to water down EQS to match and meet the needs of independent schools. I think it is important to ensure true equity and inclusion and keep the recommended EQS intact because it has the ability to have a big impact on student equity and inclusion for Vermont students. Please pass EQS as recommended by the extremely diverse group of stakeholders that worked on the document and don't cater to the needs of independent schools in a way that waters down the work.

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