

Members of the State Board of Education:

We are writing as a group of legislators concerned about the State Board of Education's proposed changes to the Rule Series 2200. We strongly believe that all students who attend publicly funded schools benefit from – and deserve – high-quality education standards. We are also deeply concerned about the State Board's lack of transparency with processes making proposed changes and decisions that impact schools funded by taxpayer dollars.

The revised education quality standards were conceived, created, and considered by an intentional cross-section of Vermonters – centering members from historically marginalized communities – to ensure education in our state is accessible and nurturing for all students.

According to the May 17, 2023 meeting minutes, the State Board decided not to apply the proposed **Education Quality Standards (EQS)** to private schools, choosing instead to “reopen [Rule Series] 2200 to apply the provisions of **Act 1** to independent schools.”

The State Board has incorporated select portions of the Act 1 updates to the EQS but not all into the Rule; effectively replicating an unjust “separate but equal” approach when it comes to ensuring quality education funded by taxpayer dollars. Proposed changes range from intentionally vague to unlawful by their violation of state and federal anti-discrimination laws, as well as their overt questioning of whether those anti-discrimination even statutes apply to them.

No school is immune from challenges related to creating and maintaining a safe and equitable environment for all students. Our state is not immune to the many biases and discriminatory practices that we would be quick to judge as unacceptable in others. Therefore, it is imperative that all schools receiving taxpayer dollars adhere to the same rules – rules that are designed to ensure a high-quality, inclusive education and which ensure every child feels valued and has a fair chance to succeed.

What happens in our schools has lasting impacts far beyond the roughly 18 years leading up to graduation and is not contained within the walls of any building. Today's classrooms are tomorrow's communities, making public investment in education one of the most important of all state investments. All schools receiving public funds must be held to the same standards, and must naturally come under the same level of public accountability.

As concerned lawmakers, we urge you to make the entire EQS, including the Act 1 provisions, apply to all publicly funded schools.

Thank you,

Rep. Mary-Katherine Stone

Rep. Angela Arsenault (Chair, Champlain Valley School District Board of Directors)

Rep. Edey Graning (Chair, Mount Mansfield Unified Union SD Board of Directors)

Rep. Elizabeth Burrows (Chair, Mount Ascutney School District Board of Directors and Member, Windsor Southeast Supervisory Union Board of Directors)

Rep. Tesha Buss

Rep. Laura Sibilia

Rep. Rebecca Holcombe

Rep. Kevin Christie (Chair, Hartford Unified Union SD Board of Directors)