

June 6, 2018

Chairwoman Krista Huling;

On May 29, 2018 you received a 107 page submission from me in which I provided a detailed description, of issues we are facing in the FNWSU. I will not waste the brief amount of time I have been given today to repeat myself, and trust that you and your colleagues have taken the time to read what I've sent you. Instead, I am going to read an email sent to me by a member of the Vermont Legislature.

I have come here today to see with my own eyes the faces of people who are about to make a decision which will cause irreparable harm to my fellow Vermonters

6/7/2018

Print Window

Subject: re: Act 46 question

From: Phil.Scott@vermont.gov

To: jdsbs_5@yahoo.com

Date: Thursday, September 15, 2016, 11:46:53 AM EDT

Dear Jay,

Thank you so much for reaching out. The situation that you have highlighted in Franklin is an example of where the existing provisions in Act 46 do not always work the way lawmakers intended them to. There is no "one size fits all" policy when it comes to education in Vermont, since all of our communities and schools are in unique situations. Act 46 consolidation does not work when educational outcomes are worsened and when per-pupil costs rise, which, as you have described, appear to be the case in Franklin. I've proposed a number of reforms to Act 46 right off the bat.

First, the Legislature must clarify existing provisions within Act 46 to ensure that school choice is preserved. As it exists, the State Board of Education has the power to mandate consolidation in the event that a school district does not restructure in a manner consistent with Act 46. Lawmakers in Montpelier must eliminate these types of barriers to school choice. In the case of Franklin, a mandated merger may have negative impacts for students, parents and property taxpayers. Mergers can be beneficial in some cases, but Act 46 needs to be reformed so that districts are given the flexibility to remain autonomous and retain control, and so that education remains local.

Second, the savings received from mergers should be retained within districts rather than being set back to Montpelier. Communities should be able to decide what to do with these efficiencies—whether to return them to school boards or to taxpayers—rather than being forced to send them back to the Legislature. This would enhance the savings for communities from voluntary mergers.

I would encourage you to reach out to your Representatives (Albert Pearce and Steve Beyor) and Senator (Dustin Degree) on this matter as well. Opening a dialogue with local lawmakers can be crucial in finding the right solutions.

Thanks again for reaching out.

Best,
Phil Scott