

For full disclosure, I am one of the two representatives who brought the amendment of S.103 to the Committee on General and Housing and subsequently to the Committee on Education.

I fully understand the implications of lawsuits that could stem from the adoption of the S. 103 amendment, and I fully **support** those lawsuits. It's in the title of this working group that it is charged with focusing on **student** protections, yet the *sole* purpose of the objections to including the S. 103 amendment language is to protect schools and districts, and not students. Well, which is it? Are we concerned with protecting students, or protecting districts? I do not like being pitted against colleagues I am otherwise comfortably and purposefully collaborating with—and a member of.

I began trying to get racism and LGBTQ harassment addressed before 2017 at our own supervisory union board, trying to force a proactive approach so that we did not have to be constantly reactive. I instead found myself running for the legislature because I realized it would never be addressed voluntarily, even at the supervisory union where I was strongly advocating. And then, as a legislator, I realized when S. 103 came up that it would be exactly the mandate that I ran for, because it would mean that school districts would be naturally required to implement ALL of the recommendations you on this working group have been discussing for the last six months—and more.

I have also been saddened and infuriated that our marginalized students now have less protection than their teachers and simultaneously more protection at their after-school jobs than they do as students, as Bor Yang and others pointed out in committee testimony last year.

Somewhere along the line we must be courageous. Now is really the time to gather our sinews and step it up. Otherwise, what on earth are we doing here besides watering everything down for the sake of bland palatability? Take a stand. Stand for students, whole students. Be courageous and ask our court system to clarify any first amendment nuances—that is why we *have* a system of checks and balances. Bring on the lawsuits as strengthening agents and don't fear them.

The formation of this working group was the Committee on Education's response to the proposed S103 amendment. I see you all slowly working together to make sure that some of the problems are addressed, and as a legislator, school board member, parent, and Vermonter I am grateful for the work that you have done here as an eclectic collection of stakeholders. Today, though, January 9th, 2024, I ask you to center, really center on marginalized students and their families and if you are privileged to set aside your own experiences, and think about S. 103 in that context and the wrongs it rights, the snarls it simplifies and the fairness it begins to create. And in the spirit of the proposed amendment to that law, that students need, and deserve, the same dignity, I ask you to reach down and gather your courage and vote in the interests of students

who need our protection the most—in favor of equal protections that fully focus on students.

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