

Memo

Date: August 27, 2021

To: Taskforce on the Implementation of the Pupil Weighting Factors Report

From: Karen Horn, Director, Public Policy and Advocacy

Re: Pupil Weighting Taskforce Report Recommendations

I am writing to you on behalf of the 246 member cities and towns of the Vermont League of Cities and Towns to urge you to implement the recommendations of the Pupil Weighting Factors Report. On April 28, we wrote to the chairs of the House Ways and Means and House Education committees to urge them to ensure that the task force created by S.13 (Act 59) be directed to "first implement the recommendations of the Pupil Weighting Factors Report and do so in a way that it does not result in substantial increases in education property tax rates across the state."

Act 59 established an eight-member Task Force on the Implementation of the Pupil Weighting Factors Report and charged it to recommend an action plan and legislation to ensure that all public school students have equitable access to education. Addressing the inequities in the current pupil weighting system by applying categorical aid to compensate for its shortcomings and inequities resolves none of the issues identified in the report. It would require more dollars be dedicated to education funding – dollars that, over time, would be raised from increased education property taxes – and require school districts to wait every year for the legislature to decide what to contribute to new categorical aid obligations.

On August 6, Winooski Mayor Kristine Lott wrote to you saying, "I know the task force has discussed a categorical funding approach instead of correcting the weighting. Allowing the weighting to remain inaccurate and inequitable and instead adding additional revenue is an inefficient and expensive solution that does a disservice to our commitment to equity in education."

We cannot support additional property taxes being dedicated to the Education Fund for equalizing historic inequities and we support Mayor Lott's analysis. We urge you to do the difficult work of implementing the recommendations of the Pupil Weighting Factors Report.