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From the Office of the Mayor of Winooski

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To: Members of the Task Force on the Implementation of the Pupil Weighting Factors Report

Dear Task Force Members,

Today I testified on behalf of the City of Winooski in support of implementing the recommendations of the pupil weighting factors report. When the education funding formula was developed, decision makers knew that some students require more resources and committed to distributing resources equitably across our state. The formula is out of date and does not provide support to our students equitably. It is underserving the kids with the most need. If you do not update the formula, you allow the inequity to persist.

- Categorical funding is an inefficient and expensive solution creating more red tape, more administrative cost, and more barriers to getting resources to students efficiently and effectively. It flies in the face of the local control we value as Vermonters.
- Additional funding in the form of categorical aid will require new revenue, further straining already overburdened Vermont taxpayers. Increasing cost will continue to reduce affordability in our state, and will perpetuate gentrification occurring in towns like Winooski, where existing residents are being priced out by ever increasing property taxes. This displacement harms families and students as they switch school districts and it decreases socioeconomic integration within our communities.
- We know that lower income districts tend to have more high needs students which the funding formula is meant to support, such as English Language Learners. The funding formula provides more resources to higher needs students and distributes that cost across all residents based on ability to pay. How would categorical aid be funded in a way that considers income as the funding formula does? If it does not, it will be in direct conflict with that principle of equity and further decrease affordability here in Vermont for those most vulnerable.
- The funding formula is about resource distribution. Categorical aid is not a solution to the distribution problem. An update to the formula is a permanent solution whereas categorical aid will change from year to year. Should aid amounts be reduced in future years due to funding shortfalls, wealthier districts will be able to fill that gap and districts like mine with a limited tax base will not be able to continue supporting their students. A fluctuating system of categorical aid does not protect the resources that these students need.

If we are truly committed to equity in our education system, correcting the education funding formula is the only solution that we should be focused on. Our shared constituents, and our future voters, need this change. I urge you to spend your limited time finding a way to phase in changes to the formula over time. Thank you for your time and service on this Task Force, and for committing to increasing equity in our education funding system.

Sincerely,



Kristine Lott
Mayor

