Submitted Written Testimony
Task Force Members,

Thank you for your work tackling the complex issue of education funding. No doubt you have been hearing from vocal advocates from around the state; education of our kids, and the question of taxation, are both topics which affect Vermonters deeply and evoke passion. I am writing to ask that you base your decision making on the work of the experts, and proceed according to the recommendations of the 2019 Pupil Weighting Factors Report. The root problem-- that the formulas themselves are inequitable-- will not be fixed by grants and other short-term band-aid solutions. Larger-scale change is difficult, but it is the right thing to do for Vermont students, schools, and taxpayers.

I am writing from Burlington, where I have two school-aged children and a spouse who teaches at Burlington High School. Our district is, simply put, unable to meet the needs of our students. One has only to spend a few minutes in the kindergarten classroom of my daughter's elementary school to understand the level of poverty, trauma, and ELL needs in play-- this year, there are several kindergarteners requiring *diaper changes*-- all this managed by one teacher and a paraeducator shared by two classrooms. Contrast this reality with the one in my husband's hometown elementary school in Norwich, where students study science in a dedicated laboratory, have access to foreign languages at a young age, and overall enjoy a level of support and enrichment that could be mistaken as occurring in another country altogether. Educating young people in these two communities is simply not the same proposition, and this fact is illustrated in detail by the Report. The challenges faced by very rural Vermont communities, and those struggling with decades of economic depression, are similarly profound. If we care about the education of Vermont kids, we have to change the system-- not apply a bandaid.

Please take the road of lasting impact by changing the formula.

Thank you for your time.

Sara Mason
Burlington