

Public Comment to Laura Sibilgia 11/19/2021

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a brief public comment today.

I am disappointed to hear such enthusiasm expressed for the cost equity model presented today given the response the nationally recognized team of education finance scientists provided the TF about this type of model on October 28th ¹

Specifically that “The dollar value for any single cost factor (e.g., poverty) does not account for all the other costs controlled for in the model. If you would like to derive a dollar value that could be used in policy, the models will need to be re-estimated with just those factors that will be accounted for in policy.”

“It is also worth noting that the dollar amounts derived from such estimation would need to be adjusted annually to account for differences inflation/cost over time.”

A funding amount that needs to be adjusted annually, rather than a funding formula that adjusts the funding amounts itself, sounds very similar to how the inadequate small schools grants should have worked, but instead we were shamed annually that they even existed and had to fight to keep them.

There has been no acknowledgement of harm. This is not a system that was properly calibrated and has gradually become out of sync and sustain has done irreparable harm. Lives have been changed.

And now, without acknowledging harm, or ensuring that we fix this system, we are taking up whether or not our wealthy residents are paying enough of their local district’s budget. I’m not opposed to looking at that. But we have seen this before with those that came before us in the legislature. This obsession with progressivity in taxing is a large part kept this current unjust system – or the “uniquely equitable education formula” as Public Assets insists on calling it - operation for the past two decades.

I do hope that now that this model is finally public, the TF will ask the nationally recognized team of education finance scientists to testify about how his model compares to the work we asked them to do in terms of ensuring equity of opportunity.

¹ *October 28, 2021 MEMO to Representative, Emilie Kornheiser Senator, Ruth Hardy - jfo.vermont.gov.* Tammy Kolbe, University of Vermont, Bruce Baker, Rutgers University Drew Atchison & Jesse Levin, American Institutes for Research, https://jfo.vermont.gov/assets/Uploads/6cd716da7e/memo-response-final-10_29_21.pdf.