**House / Senate Bill #(s) &Title:** Putting Children First

**Constitutional Authority:**

Chapter 2 Section 68 “…*a competent number of schools ought to be maintained in each town unless the general assembly permits other provisions for the convenient instruction of youth.”*

Chapter 1 Article 7 “… *that the community hath an indubitable, unalienable, and indefeasible right, to reform or alter government, in such manner as shall be, by that community, judged most conducive to the public weal.”*

1. **Purpose:** The purpose of this bill is to codify the recommendations of the grassroots organization, Campaign for Vermont, in their position paper entitled Putting Children First (December 8, 2012). Specifically:
   1. Retain and strengthen local control while reducing administrative costs. Eliminate the XX supervisory unions and create 15 regional education districts (ED) centered on existing Career and Technical Education Centers and governed by representatives from all sending schools’ boards.
   2. Retain and support talented teachers and administrators. The Secretary of Education shall appoint a commission comprised of parents, human resource managers from an array of Vermont businesses and admissions managers from Vermont’s higher education institutions (none affiliated with the K-12 system). This commission shall assess the strengths and weaknesses of the K-12 system and report recommendations for changes to the Legislature.
   3. Retain the spirit of the Brigham Decision while streamlining the school funding mechanism and returning to local cost control. Educational Districts (EDs), working with local school districts, will recommend both the school budget and an associated education property tax rate on the equalized education grand list for each ED. Towns send the majority of their education property tax dollars to their ED rather than to Montpelier. The State shall use its funds to equalize per pupil spending of EDs rather than individual towns. It shall also use a separate funding mechanism for income sensitivity payments.

This bill also strives to significantly reduce educational spending by requiring all school districts to switch to an eight day school week by XX DATE. Half the student body attends school the first 4 days; the other half attends the second 4 days, all year long. This change cuts school facility and equipment needs in half while allowing education to proceed without lengthy interruptions. (300 words maximum)

1. **Specific Problem(s) Addressed & Outcomes Required**:

Vermont’s K-12 education system is well positioned to be spectacular, to be the very best. However, while Vermont’s system is among the best resourced on a per pupil basis in the world, our results are less than best, both nationally and internationally. By too wide a margin we are not fulfilling our potential.

Vermont’s K-12 education system is also very expensive primarily due to high administrative costs, and is becoming more so while Vermont’s school population is declining. An extremely complicated funding system desperately needs an overhaul. A nineteenth century school calendar wastes resources while allowing lengthy vacation periods known to be detrimental to learning.

This bill seeks to fulfill Vermont’s K-12 education system’s potential while reducing costs dramatically. Specifically:

1. Eliminate the current XX Supervisory Unions and replace them with 15 regional Education Districts (EDs) centered on existing Career and Technical Education Centers. Cost savings of $xxxx.xx upon implementation is expected.
2. Create an Educational Excellence Commission comprised of parents, human resource managers from an array of Vermont businesses and admissions managers from Vermont’s higher education institutions that will assess the strengths and weaknesses of the K-12 system and recommend changes to the Legislature by XX DATE.
3. The EDs shall help their local school districts create reasonable budgets, set an associated education property tax rate on the equalized education grand list for each ED, and collect/distribute most of the property taxes within their district. The State shall use the remaining portion to equalize per pupil spending between the EDs. The State shall separate funding for income sensitivity payments from education funding. The expected outcome of this change is improvement in transparency of the education funding mechanism, which is currently far too cumbersome.
4. To eliminate 50% of facility and equipment costs with very little expenditures, this bill requires all school districts to change their school calendars to an eight day school week (4 days on, 4 days off for all students and faculty every month of the year). With half the student body in attendance at any one time, cost savings upon implementation is expected to be $xxxxxx.xx. (500 words maximum)

**Problem:** Revenue\_\_0\_ Social\* 100 % (social services/education reforms) Economic\*\*\_0\_\_\_Environmental\_\_0\_\_ Other \_\_0\_\_

\*Includes education, healthcare, & social safety net.

\*\*Includes commerce, regulation & economic development.

**Specific Metrics for Measuring Success:**

1. Educational Districts (EDs):
   1. *by July 1 of [the* ***year after*** *the passage of this bill]*, all supervisory unions shall be eliminated and replaced by 15 Educational Districts centered on existing Career and Technical Education Centers for a one time savings of $xxxxx.xx. First year measurement of success [12 months after establishing EDs]:
      1. The governance structure of all EDs shall be in place (local school boards have elected ED representatives), shall have met at least monthly and the following activities accomplished:
         1. Drafted vision/mission statement, major goals and strategies for presentation at Town Meeting in March.
         2. Drafted ED policies to guide supporting staff
         3. Reviewed budgetary items and tax collection procedures developed by staff
         4. Drafted ED website that displays the above
      2. The administrative structure of all EDs shall be in place (administrative staff reporting to the ED board are hired) and the following activities accomplished:
         1. Developed budgets for all sending school districts in time for presenting at Town Meeting in March
         2. Developed tax collection procedures to be implemented beginning July 1 of the 2nd anniversary of the bill’s passage.
         3. Implemented ED website that displays the above and offers opportunities for public comment
      3. The Secretary of Education shall e-file a transition progress report every quarter for the first two years [beginning xx/xx/xxxx] to the Education Committee chairs of each House. The reports shall be prominently displayed on the Department’s website along with links to ED websites as they come online.
         1. The Education Committees of each House shall study the reports to ensure that the Department of Education is on track to meet deadlines specified in this bill. It is also the responsibility of these committees to report concerns from constituents regarding the new changes and to help educate them about the new system.
            1. A specific metric of success in the first two years of implementing this bill is that 100% of questions and/or concerns posted on ED websites or e-mails/phone calls concerning the EDs are answered by General Assembly members who represent the concerned constituents.
   2. *By July 1 of [the following year]* the EDs shall take on the additional duties of aligning the Career and Tech Centers with their sending secondary schools, union negotiation, and purchasing/distribution of common supplies and materials.
      1. The websites of all EDs shall note progress in these areas and the Secretary of Education will note progress in annual reports to the General Assembly (Ed Committee Chairs) after the two year quarterly period has expired.
2. Educational Excellence Commission :
   1. *By July 1 [following the passage of this bill]* the Secretary of Education shall appoint Commission members and provide them with direction and resources to accomplish the requirements described in this bill.
   2. *By July 1 of [Year 1]* the Commission shall have met at least monthly and accomplished the following:
      1. Drafted vision/mission statement, major goals and strategies for presentation to the Education Committees of both Houses by February 1.
      2. Drafted a process for assessing the strengths and weaknesses of Vermont’s k-12 system from the perspective of employers and higher education.
      3. Drafted EEC website that displays the above
   3. *By February of [Year 2]* the Commission shall accomplish the following:
      1. Submitted a final report to the Legislature detailing solutions for aligning Vermont’s k-12 system with the needs of employers and higher education.
         1. A specific measure of success shall be a bill submitted to the Educational Committees of both Houses drawn from the Commission’s report.
      2. Drafted a report that analyzes the teacher and principal supply channels in Vermont.
      3. Working website that displays the above, with opportunities for public comment
         1. A specific measure of success shall be that 100% of questions/comments submitted on the website or via phone/e-mail shall be responded to by a Commission member.
   4. *By February of [Year 3]* the Commission shall accomplish the following:
      1. Submitted a final report to the Legislature detailing solutions for improving teacher and principal supply channels in Vermont.
         1. A specific measure of success shall be a bill submitted to the Educational Committees of both Houses drawn from the Commission’s report.
      2. Drafted a report that recommends an approach to increase Vermont’s teachers’ salaries so they are in line with the higher salary ranges among the New England states.
   5. *By February of [Year 4]* the Commission shall submit their final report on teachers’ salaries with a summary of each member’s thoughts on the Commission’s efforts. The Secretary of Education may retire the Commission at this time, or extend its efforts at his/her discretion or at the request of either House Education Committee.
3. School Calendar Change
   1. *By January 15 [after the bill passes]* the Secretary of Education shall electronically submit the following to the Education Committees of both Houses, each School District Board chair and ED administrator:
      1. A plan to quickly (by September of that year) certify currently certified Vermont teachers in a second subject area
      2. An 8 day a week school calendar with no more than 5 (6 in leap years) statewide holidays
      3. Media materials explaining the new calendar to the public, especially parents and teachers
         1. A specific measure of success shall be that 100% of questions/comments submitted by the public in any manner shall be responded to by a Commission member
   2. *By July 1 [of the same year]*
      1. Each school shall submit a plan for implementing the 8 day/week school calendar to the Secretary of Education and to its ED for posting on its website. Plan shall include:
         1. How students, faculty, and school administration shall be divided in a way that provides equal opportunity for educational services. Parental input shall be sought and documented.
         2. How younger children shall be supervised when parents are working: training older children for sitting duties and/or encouraging more registered daycares in the area.
         3. Providing work/learn opportunities for older students with community employers. Each full time job can be filled by 4-8 students during their days out of school.
         4. Providing opportunities for parents on weekends when their children are in school to interact with and/or observe their children in their classrooms.
         5. Providing opportunities throughout the school year for parents, students, faculty, school administrators, and community members to discuss the plan and offer suggestions for improvement.
   3. By September 1 [of the same year]
      1. The 8 day a week school calendar shall be implemented and each school’s plan for implementation shall begin.

**Data Collection & Public Reporting:** Weekly\_\_\_ Monthly\_\_\_\_ Quarterly\_\_XX\_\_ Annually\_XX\_

**Website(s) for Reporting Data:** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Legislative Review Frequency:** Quarterly: \_XX\_(Secretary of Education) 1 yr:\_XX\_(Commission reporting) 2 yrs:\_\_\_\_ 3 yrs:\_\_\_\_5 yrs:\_\_\_\_

**Sunset date:** All requirements of this bill shall terminate ten years after passage unless renewed by a majority vote in both houses.

**Bill text:**

Executive sections (what shall be accomplished)

Section 1: RETAIN AND STRENGTHEN LOCAL CONTROL OF SCHOOLS WHILE REDUCING ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS

Section 2: RETAIN AND SUPPORT TALENTED TEACHERS AND ADMINISTRATORS

Section 3: RETAIN THE SPIRIT OF THE BRIGHAM DECISION WHILE STREAMLINING THE SCHOOL FUNDING MECHANISM AND RETURNING TO LOCAL COST CONTROL

Administrative sections (how it shall be accomplished)

Section 4: FUNDING:

1. *Educational districts:* First year budgets for EDs shall be the total of the approved supervisory union budgets within their district. Second year funding through the sunset date of this bill shall be developed by the ED board and voted on at Town Meeting in March. If any Town votes down their budget their percentage of ED benefits will be increased/decreased to reflect the budget the Town approves.
2. *Educational Excellence Commission:*
3. *Eight Day per Week School Calendar:*

Section 5: LEGISLATIVE LANGUAGE: the actions described above shall be annotated into existing law using the following language.

1. Educational Districts:
2. Educational Excellence Commission:
3. Eight Day per Week School Calendar:

Section 6: NEW REQUIRED FORMS AND PROCEDURES:

1. Educational Districts:
   1. Determination of cost savings (procedure):
   2. Format of website?
   3. Transition report outline?
2. Educational Excellence Commission:
   1. Report outline
3. Eight Day per Week School Calendar:
   1. Determination of cost savings (procedure):
   2. 8 day/wk imposed on 7 day/wk calendar

Section 8: MISCELLANEOUS ADMINISTRATIVE DETAILS:

1. Educational Districts:
2. Educational Excellence Commission:
3. Eight Day per Week School Calendar: