

Andrea Kamp  
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4/22/15

April 22, 2015

Senate Education Committee

Vermont State House

Montpelier, VT

To the Members of the Senate Education Committee:

As residents of Peacham, in Caledonia County, we are writing to voice our concern about H.361, the pending education legislation, and its potential effects on our school and community. We are troubled by the potential damage to families and residents that would be caused by some of the changes in this legislation.

Our concerns focus on quality of education, cost of education, and the geographic realities of this rural corner of our state.

The Peacham Elementary School serves Pre-K through Grade 6 students with outstanding educational opportunities. Rigorous academic standards that are in line with Vermont's Educational Quality Standards are maintained, and plans to correct any deficits are implemented when needed. In addition, all students receive instruction by specialists in French, music and art that broaden their horizons. These fields of study are supported by active volunteers in our community.

Graduates of the Peacham Elementary School can be held up as examples of Vermont's education system at its best. Many have achieved academic success, have graduated from prestigious colleges and universities, and enjoy a dedication to their hometown. They are grounded by a sense of place that is reinforced as they explore the wider world. We've seen successful graduates return to Peacham after attaining advanced degrees and embarking on stable careers to raise their families here. The Peacham Elementary School prepares citizens for community engagement, public discourse, and personal responsibility.

- Our school is unusual in its Pre-K through 6 configuration, and a mandated merger to meet a 900-student supervisory union quota presents a burden that does not achieve the desired outcomes. Our community has taken the initiative to study alternative approaches to education for our children, maintaining quality and keeping costs under control. We hope you will consider this circumstance and allow for excellence in education in our small and rural community by
- providing an opportunity for small schools such as the Peacham Elementary School to access grant support through a competitive process
- assessing schools by performance, not size, in every measure, academic as well as financial

- allowing districts such as ours to retain local control, working closely with our supervisory union, so that community assets such as the Peacham Observatory, Historical Society, and Peacham Library continue to be integrated into the learning experience.

We consider it an educational advantage to raise our children within this community, as they grow and learn to consider themselves active and responsible citizens of this town; rather than restricting the opportunities that our children have, we are providing them with a rich array of activities that are intimately connected to a sense of place and community. We are working both to connect to our heritage and to reach out towards 21st century learning (technology, STEM, etc.).

We work closely with our assigned Supervisory Union, and we look for ways to enhance opportunities for our students and to make financial prudent decisions by using the resources of the SU, and we would like to continue to do so. For example: Shared teachers (music, language); shared transportation services; shared Extended Learning Opportunities program through grant money; shared sports programs; shared curriculum work to design units of learning in math, reading, and science. We do not see ourselves as completely separate to the broader community, and that we are working within reason to make adjustments without sacrificing local control.

Peacham is a small community, and if our students are absorbed into a larger group, the representation in governance would be so minimal that its individual students and situation would not be likely to be considered in conversations considering either academic or financial decisions.

We are asking to be recognized as a district that has established an outstanding educational foundation. Many community activities center around this foundation -- it draws new residents and visitors. We understand the needs and costs of maintaining our school, and generations of Peacham residents proudly support the school as a cultural center in our community. We would lose more than could possibly be gained if the Peacham Elementary School would be forced to close.

We respectfully ask that you consider our position as parents, residents, friends and concerned citizens.

Anna Rubin and Craig Harrison  
Annie Sproston and David Jacobs

• Andrea Kane

Lorraine and Mark Clough

Jennifer and John Burchell

Jennifer and John Mackenzie

Heather and Ross MacDonald

Diana Senturia

Cornelia Hasenfuss and Joshua Kantrowitz

Sean L. Markey