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My name is Rama Schneider, and I live in Williamstown, Vermont.

A three step path forward: accept for the most part H.361 as passed by the House, swap the financing caps for a long term solution, and address political imbalances among communities.

H.361 is in general a good bill.

It does not insist on closing small schools. As a matter of fact H.361 makes extra funds available to districts to help those schools remain open. While the bill does push for mandated district consolidation it also leaves room for alternatives.

Yes, H.361 eliminates a good number of current school boards, however school boards are no longer relevant to the routine operation of a district much less one or two buildings. School boards do have a vital role to play in oversight, policy, contracts and being that final quasi-judicial backstop; and it is those relationships that H.361 will help to formalize.

Two things about the House bill need to be fixed.

The first is spending caps. Not long ago the Senate education committee was presented with the outline of a plan that would increase tax pressure proportional to spending above statewide average and conversely reduce tax pressure proportional to spending below the average. I believe you should look to replace the spending caps currently in H.361 using the above outline as a starting point.

The second item is an omission. Under H.361 most district consolidations will create political power imbalances between larger and smaller communities. We should look to supervisory union board makeup as a template. The trick is to make centralized boards appointed by elected boards rather than directly elected.

You don't need to reinvent the wheel. You can instead fix some very important spokes. I thank you for your time.