

Windham Southwest Supervisory Union

Office of the Superintendent of Schools

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Stamford Searsburg Southern Valley Unified Union SD Twin Valley Unified Union SD

February 2, 2021

To Members of the House Committee on General, Housing and Military Affairs:

We understand that you are making decisions this week regarding two bills proposing changes to the process for statewide collective bargaining for public school employees' health benefits. On behalf of Windham Southwest Supervisory Union and the Twin Valley School Board we are writing in support of H. 63. I request that this letter be entered into the written testimony of the Committee on General, Housing and Military affairs and posted on the Committee's website.

While our districts were able to reduce budgets this year with a minimal reduction to student programming or workforce, we had to work extremely hard to reduce expenditures. The healthcare increases made this especially challenging. Without healthcare cost containment, this will prove impossible in future years.

It is critical that the impact of healthcare costs be addressed in a more sustainable way. It is essential to take into account not only the cost of the benefits themselves but the ability of our taxpayers and school districts to afford them. The overall impact on our schools and student learning will be significant if the cost of benefits continues to increase at this level. An example of the importance of cost containment in health care is evident in that our WSWSU budget total dedicated to healthcare in 2020 was 9.06% and for 2022 will be \$13.17%.

Rather than H. 81, we want you to support H.63 because it balances appropriate access to health care benefits and reasonable cost containment to ensure the financial sustainability of the benefits. Cost containment is needed in order to avoid further jeopardizing educational opportunities for students and maintenance of facilities. Please support H.63.

Sincerely,

Homer Sumner, WSWSU Board Chair

Kathy Larsen, Twin Valley School District Board Chair

Barbara Anne Komons-Montroll, Superintendent

