

Waitsfield Elementary School

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The Waitsfield Elementary School Board wishes to express our concern about two elements that merit deeper exploration and attention in the current debate of S199/H527's impact on our schools and communities. The effect that this bill will have upon school enrollment, as well as evidence of risk justifying the elimination of the philosophical exemption both deserve further exploration than has yet been present in debate. We ask you to insure that these topics are fully addressed in the coming days.

The potential impact of S199/H527's upon school enrollment is significant. WES currently has 12 students, approximately 8% of our population, with philosophical vaccine exemptions on file. We are a relatively small community school and the loss of these students would have a significant impact on our school budget, cost per pupil and ultimately school management and staffing decisions. We know that the parents electing this exemption generally have strong and informed convictions regarding the vaccines they have declined. While we cannot state the exact number, we know that many will make the choice, under the proposed restrictions, to remove their children from our school if this revision to statute is passed. We urge legislators to carefully consider the enrollment impact on our small community schools if this bill is passed.

The second topic that we believe merits much further exploration is the threat to student health justifying a denial of rights and access to education. As we understand, Vermont vaccination rates are at 91.2%, already above the CDC stated goal of 90%. This was considered a positive factor in Vermont's recently conferred status as the healthiest state in the nation. We respectfully request that more evidence of how our population is at risk under the current legislation and how this risk is meaningfully mitigated by the proposed legislation is included in the dialogue.

Thank you for your attention to insuring that the proposed change to S199/H527, eliminating the philosophical exemption from required vaccinations, is carefully and thoroughly considered for the full impact. We all want the best for our children; we want to be sure that what is truly best for kids and schools is fully explored in this discussion.

Respectfully
The Waitsfield Board of School Directors