

Subject: Proposed School District Map
Wed 2/18/2026 8:33 AM

Dear Members of the Senate Education Committee,

I am a parent and constituent from Waterford, Caledonia County, writing to express my concern about the district map proposed on February 5. As drafted, it would remove Waterford students' access to St. Johnsbury Academy, our local high school that has served generations of families, and require them to travel roughly 30 extra minutes round-trip to attend school in Danville.

St. Johnsbury Academy is the nearest high school to Waterford and has functioned as the local high school for decades. This school is already serving our community effectively. Asking families to bypass it in favor of a more distant school is unnecessary, disruptive, out of touch with the realities of the Northeast Kingdom, and certainly cannot have been the intent of the law.

The proximity of St. Johnsbury Academy has allowed generations of children to receive a high-quality education while keeping our community strong and connected. This is why so many families choose to live in Waterford. Forcing students to literally drive past the school that has served them and their families for decades takes education reform in the wrong direction.

Our family specifically has - thus far - decided to stay in Waterford largely influenced by the educational opportunities our children have access to. **If the school choice that is currently available is taken away, it is very likely our family will choose to relocate.** I cannot imagine we are the only Waterford-based family who might prioritize our children's future with a decision like that.

I would also like to add that we have been facing a bus driver shortage since students returned to school from December break. Only 1 of the 2 routes has been running and the bus company has not only been unable to hire a new driver, they have not received any applications for the position in all that time.

I know this is one of many factors that complicates the issue you are working to solve across the state but I thought it was also worth mentioning.

I urge you to reconsider this map and ensure that Waterford students retain school choice access to St. Johnsbury Academy. Please do not dismantle a system that is already working, supporting student success, and keeping our community intact.

Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration.

Sincerely,
Melissa Leo
Waterford Vermont