

Dear School Board and Select Board Members,

Rising property taxes are a pressing concern for Vermonters and legislators have pledged to address this issue in the upcoming session. While we wholeheartedly agree that property taxes must remain manageable for hardworking Vermonters closing rural elementary schools is not the solution. Such action would have dire consequences for children and their communities and will fail to reduce property taxes.

The evidence is clear: rural community elementary schools are no more expensive per pupil to operate than larger schools. State mandated consolidation efforts have failed to reduce costs, instead they have continued to rise. Research shows that students from low-income backgrounds and those with special needs perform better in smaller school settings.

To ensure our voices are heard in the State House, we must stand together. The **Community Schools Alliance** is a coalition of Vermont's rural community schools committed to advocating for the value and importance of community schools especially for our youngest children.

We understand that the legislature is considering substantial policy changes, including potential “enrollment thresholds” for schools and the closure of those below the thresholds. The Community Schools Alliance will advocate against such measures, emphasizing the indispensable role small, rural schools play in the lives of Vermont’s children, families, and communities. Our goal is to encourage legislators to pursue meaningful property tax reform that strengthens Vermont’s future, not quick fixes that would dismantle rural communities and harm children.

Joining the Alliance is free and straightforward. If your community school or selectboard wishes to become a member, please email us at **vtschoolsrock@gmail.com** with the name of a lead contact and their email address. This contact will be added to a Google group for communication purposes.

To bolster our efforts and ensure we are heard at the state house, the Alliance will raise funds to hire a lobbyist. This professional will help us:

- Identify areas where we can have the most impact.
- Organize school board members, selectboard members, parents, and students to testify.
- Communicate effectively with legislators.
- Maximize our collective influence.

We estimate this effort will require approximately \$40,000. If your school, town, or individual community members wish to contribute, please send donations to **[Insert Address/Account Information]**. All funds will directly support this initiative.

As school board members, select board members, parents, grandparents, and community members, we understand the profound value of community schools of all sizes—they are the beating heart of our communities. The Community Schools Alliance is committed to advocating

for their ability to thrive and prosper into the future. We invite you to join us in this important work.

Sincerely,

The Marlboro School Board

The Peacham School Board

The Peacham Select Board