

—Slug:.....COMM-0851.opin.letter.000_decarolis
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—For section.....Voices/Letters from readers
—Format.....LETTERS - Opinions - Letters to the Editor
—Dateline.....
—Article Number:.....43007



Notes from editor (not for publication):



HEADLINE ELEMENTS:

####BEGIN HED####

1 The economic realities of school choice

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3 TEXT BODY:

####BEGIN TEXT####

4 In the last 30 years, Vermont has created a public school
5 system where a small minority of towns representing 18% of the
6 population get to choose to have their private school education
7 publicly funded. The majority of Vermonters — 82% — do not.

8 But the majority does support the minority's private
9 school education, increasingly at the expense of their public
10 schools' operational capacity.

11 This needs to be part of the education debate happening
12 now. Excluding it poses an economic threat to Vermont taxpayers
13 and risks exacerbating an already widening opportunity gap
14 between the haves and have-nots.

15 For example, research on school choice programs have
16 shown that while voucher students perform no better than their
17 peers who remain in public schools, these programs reduce
18 funding for public schools. Indiana’s voucher programs alone cost
19 the state’s public schools \$115 million in 2014-2015.

20 A 2021 economic analysis estimated the expansion of
21 school choice programs would result in a \$66.5 billion to \$203
22 billion cost to taxpayers annually. The Vermont Redistricting Task
23 Force identified a similar trend in Vermont, with increasing costs
24 passed on to families paying tuition (who have to make up the
25 difference), as well as to taxpayers (who pay a higher premium
26 for publicly funded private-school tuition).

27 Some might say that’s a problem for bigger states, that
28 the cost to Vermonters is a drop in the bucket.

29 But consider St. Johnsbury Academy’s 2024 tax filing,
30 indicating a total revenue of \$38.4 million in 2023. Its 2025
31 school report reflects that 43% of their revenues are from public
32 tax dollars. That’s \$16.5 million of public education funds to one
33 private school alone.

34 Considering we have 45 private schools approved to
35 receive public education dollars, this is no small drop. And
36 without an honest conversation about school choice, I’m afraid
37 that Vermont might need a bigger bucket.

####END TEXT####

BIO/COATTAIL:

####BEGIN BIO/COATTAIL####

38 The writer is a board member of Vermont Friends of
39 Public Education.

####END BIO/COATTAIL####

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41 ####BEGIN LINKS####

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42 ####BEGIN VIDEO####

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LOGLINE (SOCIAL MEDIA):

43 ####BEGIN LOGLINE####

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