

PHILIP B. SCOTT
GOVERNOR



State of Vermont
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

June 14, 2023

The Honorable BetsyAnn Wrask
Clerk of the Vermont House of Representatives
115 State Street
Montpelier, VT 05633

Dear Ms. Wrask:

Vermonters have made their ongoing concerns about the affordability of our state abundantly clear. Despite these concerns and my efforts, legislative action this year has added a new, approximately \$100 million payroll tax; \$20 million in unnecessary DMV fee increases; hundreds of millions in additional cost pressures that will come as a result of the override of my veto of the clean heat standard bill; an unsustainable \$70 million increase in base budget spending over my recommendation; an eventual doubling of their own pay and benefits; and more.

With H.165, the Legislature has added \$20-30 million in property tax pressure to pay for school meals for all students, including those from affluent families. This will be paid for by all Vermonters, including those with low incomes. That's not progressive education funding policy, it's regressive policy that hurts the very families we are trying to help.

I know a veto would in all reality be overridden, and further distract us from the work we should be prioritizing for our kids, like reversing pandemic learning loss; addressing declining math and reading scores; addressing youth mental health challenges (which inhibit learning); and more.

Therefore, I'm allowing H.165, *An act relating to school food programs and universal school meals*, to become law without my signature. And I ask the Legislature to rethink this sincere but regressive policy in the future, so working Vermonters are not paying for the meals of families who could better afford it.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Philip B. Scott", with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Philip B. Scott
Governor

PBS/kp