



PRESS RELEASE: Public Testimony Urges Action on State Education Funding

March 26– Public testimony in the House Finance Committee today showed strong support for the legislature to act and address the lack of meaningful State education funding. While specific aspects of the amendment to HB 1583 drew criticism from different speakers, its general goal, and that of the underlying bill, of increasing state funding for education was clearly supported by members of the public and elected officials who testified.

“Today, and through this whole legislative process, it has been really clear that there is a broad consensus around the State that the legislature needs to do something about how little it contributes to our schools,” said Zack Sheehan, NHSFFP Executive Director. “The public has been clear, and the courts have been clear that what’s being done isn’t enough. I think the legislature has also been aware of this reality for some time, and I hope they continue down this path of doing something to fix this problem.”

As it was originally passed by the full House in February, HB 1583 would increase base adequacy from \$4,100 to \$4,404 per pupil and add over \$60 million in targeted aid for communities with lower property values and districts with higher proportions of students eligible for free and reduced-price lunch.

The amendment, 1005h, seeks to increase base adequacy to \$7,356.01, the amount set in last year’s *ConVal* ruling, and requires municipalities that raise Statewide Education Property Tax (SWEPT) revenues in excess of the State’s defined cost of an adequate education must remit that excess revenue to the State, which would bring the State in line with last year’s ruling on SWEPT in the *Rand* lawsuit.

NHSFFP supports these changes and this attempt to bring the State in line with these court rulings, but it strongly opposes the other major component of the amendment, which would impose a spending cap on all school districts in the state. The Project believes that this both infringes on the ability of communities to make their own budget decisions, and will realistically only serve to lock in the existing funding disparities between communities in the State

“Of course I’d like to see parts of this amendment become law, but I have real concerns about the spending cap provision,” Sheehan said. “But, the pieces of the amendment that address the lawsuits show at least the start of a commitment by the legislature to begin taking some responsibility for its role in fixing our school funding system. They are ultimately responsible for finding a solution to this problem, and I think today’s testimony made it clear that this is a problem the people of New Hampshire want something done about.”

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The mission of the NHSFFP, a registered 501(c)(3), is to inform the public about the condition of New Hampshire public schools and their funding; to advocate for changes to make the system more equitable for students and taxpayers alike; and, if necessary, to prosecute, manage, control, and/or participate in a lawsuit challenging the constitutionality of the system for funding education in New Hampshire.



Other Notable Testimony

From a letter submitted by 11 of the 13 NH Mayors in support of HB 1583 as amended and passed by the House of Representatives in February:

“There is a significant gap between the actual cost of education and what the State of New Hampshire provides to municipalities. While the state currently provides \$4,100 per student in adequacy aid, districts across New Hampshire spend an average of \$20,000 per student, with the majority of this difference being shouldered by local property taxpayers. Unique community profiles and tough decision-making often result in differences in tax rates and the quality of education provided to students throughout New Hampshire. However, reliable and sufficient spending by the State of New Hampshire on education will help to improve opportunities for all students. Let’s invest in the futures of our students and our state by providing a well-funded education to all.”

From a letter submitted by the NH Business for Social Responsibility:

“New Hampshire’s businesses are poised for growth that will positively impact our profitability, the state’s revenues and our communities’ ability to thrive, but we are limited by access to highly skilled professionals. We must create a fairly funded, strong public education system to meet the needs of a dynamic digital economy. We cannot continue to shortchange our future. It is critical that we not settle for short-term budget savings at the expense of our economic leadership.

We believe that HB 1583, as passed, is a great starting point, specifically increasing support for communities most in need, but we need to keep working. We hope that you will seriously consider how New Hampshire can move forward with real solutions to address this decades-old problem, and not continue to kick the can down the road.”