



The Senate of the State of New Hampshire

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RUTH WARD
Senate District 8

State House, Room 302
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January 10, 2025

Thank you for contacting me regarding education funding. I appreciate you sharing your views.

The Legislature has been wrestling with education funding lawsuits for more than 25 years, with each new lawsuit leading to a change in the state aid formula, which prompts another lawsuit from another set of communities.

It has long been my belief that the people of New Hampshire have the authority to set education policy and education funding levels through the Representatives and Senators they elect every two years. In the last Legislature, we adopted a new Student-Centered Education Funding Formula that increased state Adequacy Grants to local school districts by \$169 million, and will increase state aid to education by 31% over the decade. This is while student populations continue to fall in schools across the Granite State. We are delivering a record amount of state funding for each student in our public schools.

A recent decision by Judge Ruoff in the Con-Val Lawsuit would mandate a \$500,000 million annual increase in Base Adequacy payments. This ruling has been appealed to the New Hampshire Supreme Court, where I believe it will be overturned. But if upheld, increasing Base Adequacy for every New Hampshire student to \$7,536.01 would likely force the Legislature to forego efforts to target additional aid to serve students with greater financial and education needs, such as those in poorer communities and with special education requirements.

Thus replacing the existing Student-Centered Education Funding Formula would have the perverse effect of reducing state educational aid to many New Hampshire communities, including the five plaintiffs towns that originated the Claremont Education Funding lawsuit:

Town	Current Funding	Ruoff Decision	Decrease
Allenstown	\$5,122,652.44	\$3,531,105.48	(\$1,591,546.96)
Claremont	\$15,859,197.22	\$11,168,924.22	(\$4,690,273.00)
Franklin	\$10,114,233.20	\$6,244,222.65	(\$3,870,010.55)
Lisbon	\$1,973,526.96	\$1,397,641.90	(\$575,885.06)
Pittsfield	\$5,346,992.34	\$3,482,776.49	(\$1,864,215.85)

I will not support any change in state education funding that would dramatically decrease state aid to Claremont. Additionally, mandating a \$500 million increase in state spending would have devastating effects on the state's finances and economy.

Draining the Rainy Day Fund, which the Legislature has made concerted efforts to rebuild over the past decade, would dramatically reduce the state's bond rating, increasing the cost of borrowing for capital projects for decades to come.

Reducing other streams of state aid, such as the recently-increased Rooms and Meals Revenue Sharing formula or the additional state aid for local road and bridge infrastructure projects, would result in an increase in local property tax rates, contrary to the stated aims of plaintiffs. Likewise, reducing the state's increased investments in local clean water infrastructure projects would leave municipalities without adequate resources to address the prevalence of PFAS contamination.

And if the court envisions no reductions in current state spending to offset the mandated increase in Base Adequacy, New Hampshire taxpayers would be forced to pay an additional \$500 million a year in taxes, which would require a Broad-based Sales or Income Tax, or both, which the voters have New Hampshire have consistently rejected.

Per-pupil spending has risen dramatically across New Hampshire while we have seen test scores stagnate. Fixing how our schools deliver an education to New Hampshire students is far more important than pouring even more money into a system that has failed to improve over the past quarter century.

I will continue to work to improve educational opportunities for all New Hampshire students, empowering parents to make decisions that our best for their families, and giving local school boards the ability to innovate and improve.

Thank you again for sharing your views with me.

Sincerely,



Senator Ruth Ward
District 8