



## **PRESS RELEASE: School Funding Reform a Major Issue at First State Budget Hearing**

**March 12:** Today, the House Finance Committee held the first public hearing on the new State budget, with school funding being a central focus of testimony over the course of the afternoon. That included a [letter submitted by 241 local elected leaders](#), representing 88 communities and 58% of New Hampshire students calling on the legislature to pass a budget where the State fulfills its constitutional responsibility to fund education.

“The budget is the single biggest vehicle the legislature has to create a much-needed fix to its worst in the nation funding for public school,” said Zack Sheehan, NHSFFP Executive Director. “Testimony today made it pretty clear that people are tired of the State’s excuses for not doing what it needs to for all students to receive an adequate education.”

While the budget initially proposed by Governor Kelly Ayotte does include some small increases to school funding, including maintaining the 2% annual increases to adequacy aid, and roughly \$15 million a year to stop the prorating of special education aid reimbursements, the proposed budget fails to meaningfully address the gap between state funding for education and the actual cost of educating New Hampshire students.

At one point in the hearing, Rep. Ken Weyler, who was chairing the hearing said “It seems like we’ve heard a lot about school funding, more than we really need to know. We know that it’s a problem, we don’t need to hear it 50 times.”

Nancy Glynn, a member of the Sutton Select Board, responded during her testimony that “I understand the frustration in regards to the repetition of hearing from all of us about the importance of funding public education. I too share your frustration with the repetitious nature that our State Legislature has done in continuing to put forward bills to continue to defund public education.”

Later in the hearing, Rep. Weyler said “Again, I don’t think we need to hear 100 times about school funding. We are aware of that.”

Since the *Claremont* decisions of the 1990s, the State Legislature has consistently failed to act on ensuring an adequate education for all New Hampshire children, and the State has continued to lose every single court case dealing with school funding in the intervening decades. There are two lawsuits currently awaiting NH Supreme Court rulings, and an additional decision pending in the Superior Court on the issue.

“The Legislature has the opportunity over the coming months to craft a budget that will close the wide gaps that exist in the opportunities available to students and the rates paid by taxpayers to support them,” Sheehan said. “Students and taxpayers all around New Hampshire would benefit from a fair funding budget where the State takes on a bigger share of funding. It’s time for our representatives to get to work on finally making that happen.”

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*Notable Quotes from Other Testimony*



**Flo Dapice, Student Member of the Hopkinton School Board**

“The vast majority, 85%, of New Hampshire students attend public schools. There are over 160,000 of us, and we can’t vote. We can’t choose where we live, or where we go to school, but we all deserve, and not just deserve but are constitutionally entitled to, an adequate education. We will be in school while you write and vote on this budget, so it is your job to represent us. Please consider my testimony and this letter as you work on the budget.”

**Robert Cone, Mayor of Berlin**

“It is clear that we must shift the burden of funding from local municipalities to the state level. Many of our communities, including Berlin, are struggling to meet the financial demands of our education system. The reliance on local funding creates disparities that hinder equal opportunities for our children.”

**Dale Girard, Mayor of Claremont**

“A strong public education system is critical to the future of New Hampshire. Approximately 85% of the state’s children attend public schools. Providing adequate state funding would not only improve educational opportunities for students but would also offer real property tax relief to residents statewide. Without action, the burden on local taxpayers will continue to grow, and students will continue to be shortchanged.”

**Deb Nelson, Hanover and Dresden School Boards and retired public school teacher**

“It is a sorry statement about public education in New Hampshire that many other districts do not have the resources we do. Towns with lower property values are struggling to provide even the most basic educational opportunities for their students. The current system forces communities into a lose-lose choice, either raise property taxes to make up for inadequate state aid or cut critical program that our students need.”

**MacKenzie Nicholson, Senior Director of MomsRising NH**

New Hampshire’s public schools are the hearts of our community, every dollar diverted away from them weakens the system that the vast majority of our kids use. Our teacher, students, and schools need resources, not roadblocks. Public tax dollars should stay in public schools to ensure that every child, no matter which town they live in, gets access to a high-quality education. Moms, parents, and caregivers across New Hampshire are watching this budget process closely.”