



Testimony of Zack Sheehan,  
Executive Director, NH School Funding Fairness Project,  
on HB 1 & 2 before the House Finance Committee, Wednesday, March 12, 2025

Chairman Weyler, Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony this afternoon on HB 1 and 2. For the record, my name is Zack Sheehan and I am the Executive Director of the NH School Funding Fairness Project (NHSFFP), a nonprofit organization that educates citizens and policymakers about the system New Hampshire uses to fund its public schools, builds awareness of the shortcomings of that system, and advocates for changes in the law to make that system fairer for students and taxpayers alike.

New Hampshire's school funding system continues to make worse the deep and enduring inequities in educational opportunity for our students and enormous differences in the property taxes we pay as residents and business owners to support our public schools.

The gap between what the State has determined to be the cost of an adequate education – **about \$5,297.53 per student, on average** – and actual per pupil expenditures – **\$22,106 per student, on average**, for the 2023-24 school year – highlight these inequities. This lack of funding creates huge disparities in equalized school property tax rates.

These inequities exist because the State of New Hampshire has failed for decades to fulfill its fundamental, Constitutional responsibility to provide an adequate education to every child within its borders. Instead, the State continues to downshift that responsibility onto local property tax payers, forcing them to bear **over \$2.7 billion** in costs each year. That is \$2.7 billion that is currently being raised by local property taxes to support our public schools. About 70% of all school district revenue comes from local property taxes, which is the highest share of any state in the country.

HB 1 & 2 present a significant opportunity to start making steps in the right direction to increase funding for public schools from the state so local communities can provide well rounded and robust education for all their students and local property tax payers can get some relief. People all over the state are demanding that you take this issue seriously. We are showing you that we care deeply about our public schools, that we work hard to walk a fine line at the local level to balance the needs of our students and schools and those of taxpayers. We are doing the work, and it's time for the Legislature to step up and do the same.

There are multiple, recent court rulings have found that the system you use to fund our public schools is unconstitutional. Let alone decades of other rulings finding the same results.

Two months ago, more than 1,500 people showed up at the deliberative session for the Kearsarge Regional School District and voted overwhelmingly to reject an attempt to slash their school budget.

One month ago, more than 30,000 people from every single city and town in this state signed in against HB 283 that would have gutted the definition of an adequate education. More than 14,000 of them took the time to submit written testimony as well, and over 60 showed up to testify here in this hall to oppose the bill. Not a single person except the sponsor testified in support.

And just last night, communities all over the state voted again and again to reject attempts to slash their school budgets or impose restrictive and arbitrary budget caps.

How much more evidence do you need? How many more examples of people from every corner of this state standing up to defend our public schools do you need to take this issue seriously?

This is not a new issue. There is not a lack of data or evidence to show that such an inequitable funding scheme harms our students, our taxpayers, and our communities.

We believe every child in New Hampshire should have access to an excellent, fairly funded public education system regardless of zip code, and that this education should be supported by fair taxes that do not downshift to local property tax payers. There are ways to accomplish these goals that are not at the expense of other critical services and programs being represented here today, many in the form of bills that have been proposed this very session.

Granite Staters support their public schools, but the State's failure to adequately fund education continues to put strains on property tax payers and negatively impact the opportunities available to students. You have the opportunity to solve both of those problems with a budget that prioritizes fair school funding.