



PRESS RELEASE: House Advances Budget that Fails to Meaningfully Address School Funding Shortcomings

April 11: Yesterday, the House passed HB 1 and HB 2, sending its proposed State Budget to the State Senate without meaningfully addressing the State’s ongoing failure to adequately fund education. The House did vote to remove an arbitrary, State mandated budget cap on all school districts in New Hampshire, bringing the legislature’s position in line with every single community that voted to reject a locally proposed school budget cap.

“Voters already have the ability to enact local school budget caps if they want them, and already have a say in their local school budgets by showing up and voting,” said Zack Sheehan, NHSFFP Executive Director. “These State mandated caps would have done nothing to actually provide relief for local property tax payers. Until the State starts adequately funding education, local property tax payers will continue to bear the brunt of these costs. Trying to impose arbitrary caps when voters clearly didn’t want them was just an attempt to distract from who is actually responsible here, the State.”

This was the first year that a new law allowed voters to propose per-student spending caps in their districts, with the proposed caps being put to the voters during the school district meeting. Brookline, ConVal, Epping, Epsom, Haverhill, Hollis-Brookline, Kearsarge, Salem, Thornton, and Weare all had proposed caps, and all of them were rejected by the voters. The House first approved this language on a 190-185 vote just two days after most of these communities had their town meeting votes. The House Finance Committee then voted to include the caps in its proposed budget.

On top of the obvious opposition to budget caps at the polls, and infringement on the local control of school budgets, the overly restrictive nature of the caps would have negative impacts on schools and students around the state, leading to cuts to student programs like the arts, sports, AP classes, career and technical education, and more. In recognition of these issues, the House [supported an amendment](#) to remove the caps from the budget [206-165](#).

The budget also opted to expand eligibility for the school voucher program, while including only modest increases to funding for public schools. [A floor amendment](#) that would have used the funds allocated for expanded voucher eligibility (which [likely underestimates the cost](#) of expanded eligibility) to increase public school funding for 93 cities and towns with higher levels of need and high property taxes failed [166-198](#).

“This budget does not prioritize public education, does not bring the State closer to fulfilling its constitutional obligations to fund education, and does not provide property tax relief for taxpayers around New Hampshire,” Sheehan said. “Increasing State aid for public education is a necessity for our state, and something the many people spoke about during the public hearing on the budget. The legislature needs to start listening to Granite Staters and prioritize meaningful investment in our public schools to deliver for our students, our schools, and our communities.”