



PRESS RELEASE: Testimony Calls for Fair School Funding During Senate Budget Hearing

May 7: Granite Staters waited for hours and late into the evening last night to be able to testify to the Senate Finance Committee about the need for passing a State Budget that prioritizes public school funding during the public hearing on HB 1 and HB 2.

“The budget passed by the House fails to meaningfully address the State’s school funding failings, and the folks who testified today made it clear that has to be corrected,” said Zack Sheehan, NHSFFP Executive Director. “The small increases to adequacy aid won’t keep pace with inflation, the open enrollment provisions are not clearly defined and will make crafting local school budgets nearly impossible, and the unaccountable and over budget school voucher program seems like the only thing in the whole budget that is actually getting more money, while public schools and so many other important programs are being left behind.”

Testimony submitted to the committee included a [letter signed by 438 local elected leaders](#), representing 143 communities and 71% of New Hampshire students, calling on the legislature to pass a budget that has the State fulfilling its constitutional responsibility to fund education.

A [petition with 1,931 signatures](#) was also submitted to the committee that called for an “equitable and comprehensive school funding solution that works for every community in New Hampshire.”

Kathleen Bigford of Bradford delivered the petition, and said during her testimony, “We are asking for fair, accountable, and equitable public education funding for students and taxpayers in every zip code. Towns like mine have had to fight tooth and nail at the local level because of the State’s failure to listen and to act.”

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, with decisions potentially coming down any day now.

“The fact that there was only one public hearing on the budget meant a lot of people did not get the chance to be heard, but the number of people who waited late into the evening to be able to speak shows how much Granite Staters oppose the negative outcomes the cuts in the House budget will create,” Sheehan said. “The Senate should take what they heard and get to crafting a budget that prioritizes the services that make our communities stronger, like public schools. A clear solution that ensures students have access to opportunities in their schools and taxpayers get treated fairly is for the State to pay its share of school funding.”