



PRESS RELEASE: State Budget Fails to Adequately Fund Public Education

June 26: Today, the House and the Senate both voted to pass HB 1 and HB 2, sending a final budget to the Governor that fails to adequately fund public education, instead directing an unknown and unlimited amount of funds to subsidize private education through the unaccountable school voucher program.

“With this budget, the State continues to not adequately fund public education in New Hampshire and downshift costs to local property tax payers,” said Zack Sheehan, NHSFFP Executive Director. “While proponents of this budget will say that this is the most money the State has ever contributed to education, the funding going to public schools will not keep up with inflation, and millions and millions more that we could be spending on our public schools will be funneled to vouchers instead.”

The budget only increases adequacy aid and the three differentiated aid categories by 2% annually, the same as in current law. For the 2023-24 school year, the most recent year with complete data, the average adequacy aid per pupil was \$5,148 per pupil, while the actual average cost of educating a New Hampshire student was \$21,545. This budget will continue that wide gap between what the State deems to be sufficient for an adequate education and the actual cost of education.

The budget does introduce an 80% floor for reimbursements to school districts for State Special Education Aid, which helps districts provide services to the students with the most complicated needs.

The budget includes language declaring that the courts have no role to play in determining the cost of an adequate education.

“Legislators have been ignoring the courts on school funding for years, and because the State continues to lose in Court on issues dealing with the cost of an adequate education they have brought about this language to wish away the Court’s authority,” Sheehan said. “The Courts have a legitimate role to play in our system of government, and have been the only branch actually working to ensure that students are having their constitutional right to an adequate education fulfilled.”

The budget also includes a new law that threatens to strip all State funding from any public school if it “knowingly or unknowingly” violates vague language prohibiting anything that “classifies individuals based on a characteristic identified under RSA 354-A:1 for the purpose of achieving demographic outcomes”. This language is so broad that many important programs schools offer could potentially violate it, such as a program attempting to make playground equipment accessible for students with physical disabilities so specific students can be included with their peers at recess. The vagueness of the language puts at risk over \$1 billion in public school funding for programs and initiatives that are critical to a wide range of students across the state.



“The legislature has once again failed to meet the moment and deliver for students and taxpayers around New Hampshire,” Sheehan said. “This budget continues to downshift the costs of education in inequitable ways that keep opportunities away from students and drive property taxes higher. This budget doesn’t work for New Hampshire students, schools, or taxpayers.”