



NH SCHOOL  
Funding Fairness  
Project

# NH School Funding Fairness Project

Advocating to make school funding more  
equitable for students & taxpayers alike

MILFORD: January 28, 2026

# Milford Schools are Worth Celebrating

- Heron Pond Art Teacher Lisa Rancourt was awarded **Eastern Region Elementary Art Educator of the Year** by the National Art Association
- MHS Boys' Indoor Track Team and MHS Girls Varsity Basketball Team were **Division 2 State Champions**
- MHS Senior Josh Berry was recognized as **"Who's Who in FBLA" Future Business Leaders of America**. Milford's FBLA chapter received the prestigious Honor Chapter award and 1st Place in the Hope for a Cure state officer project.
- MHS teacher Julie Dutton was selected as a **Coach of the Year for NH for Track and Field** by the US Track and Field and Cross Country Coaches Association.
- Jacques Memorial School students launched a school-wide **KINDNESS Challenge** and recorded hundreds of acts of kindness and good deeds.
- Milford High School Senior Art students painted a **mural for the Milford Conservation Committee**. The beautifully painted shipping container can be found next to the rail trail on South Street.

# Milford School District: 2025 A Year at Glance



Looking for more reasons to celebrate the successes in Milford's schools? Scan to see Superintendent Michaud's full "2025 A Year at Glance"

# Public Schools Serve Whole Communities



## STUDENTS

Serving NH children, from the very youngest through the most formative developmental years of our human experience, schools strive to meet diverse needs. At Pembroke Hill Elementary, students' access to opportunity is top priority.



## LEADERSHIP

Teachers, administrators, and school staff routinely go above and beyond for their students and community. Pictured above are two Dover NH admins who served up a community Thanksgiving dinner.



## PROGRAMS

From the stage, to the fields, to the lab, to the hands-on training of CTE programs, public schools offer myriad programs that create cohesion and pride for their communities. A live show in the Black Box Theatre at Somersworth HS welcomes community members.



## SERVICES

Students, teachers, and school staff all over NH provide community-facing services such as this combined food pantry and thrift shop at Merrimack Valley High.

# Local Tensions Mount... but why?

NEWS

## Chichester nearly cuts school finances by 9% but ultimately passes budget unchanged



by Rachel Wachman Monitor staff March 8, 2025

CONCORD MONITOR

NEWS

## In emotional reversal of last year, Pembroke residents approve larger school budget



by Jeremy Margolis Monitor staff  
March 9, 2025



EDUCATION

## Concord school district faces \$5 million budget shortfall, considers tax hike



by Jeremy Margolis October 9, 2025



The CABINET PRESS

January 26, 2026 | Submit News

## Amherst voters reject \$83M in school projects

CABINET NEWS

MAR 27, 2025

With an unsettled national economy, voters were in no mood to approve major spending proposals put forth on the Amherst School District ballot Tuesday.

NEWS

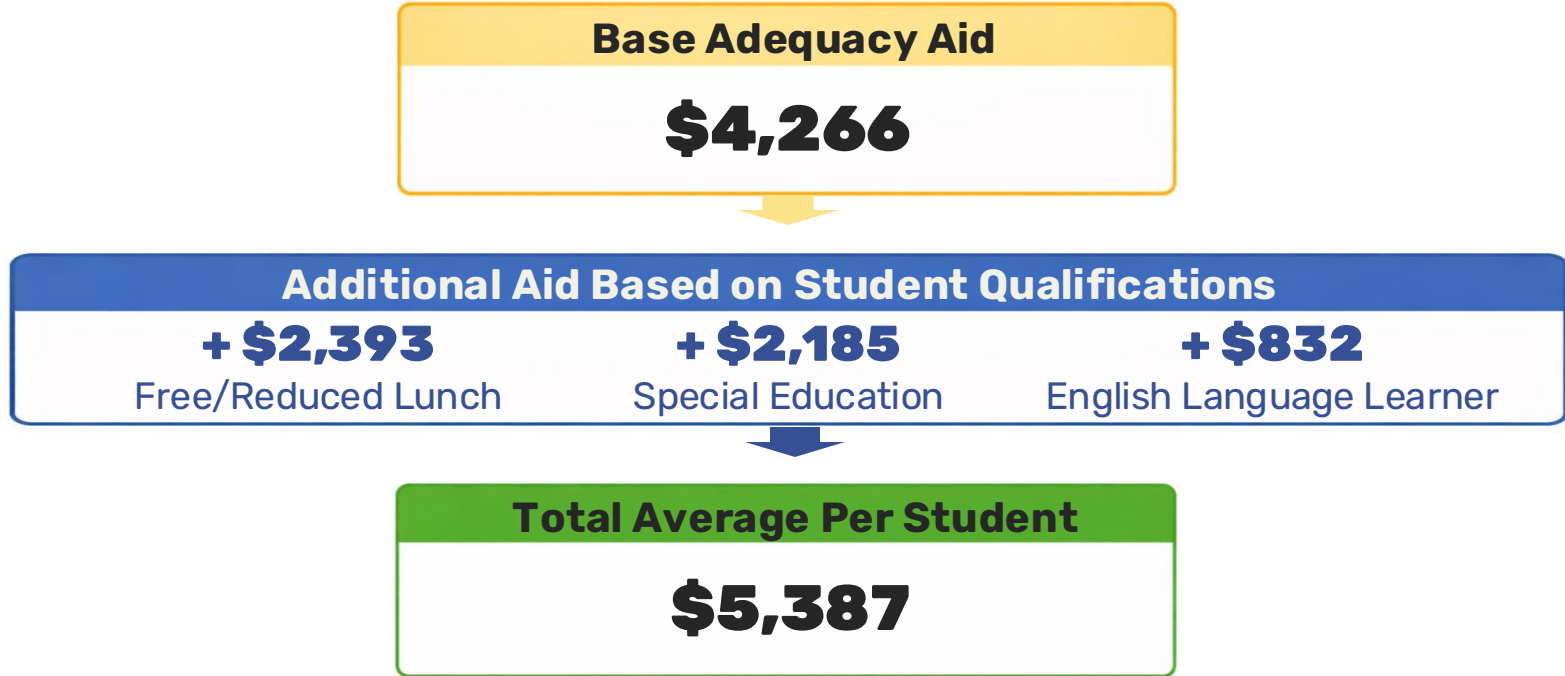
## Hopkinton voters call for action on 'inadequate' state funding for public education



by Sruthi Gopalakrishnan Monitor staff  
March 16, 2025



# How NH Calculates the Cost of an Adequate Education



# New Hampshire School Funding

NH Relies Overwhelmingly on Local Property Taxes to Fund Public Education

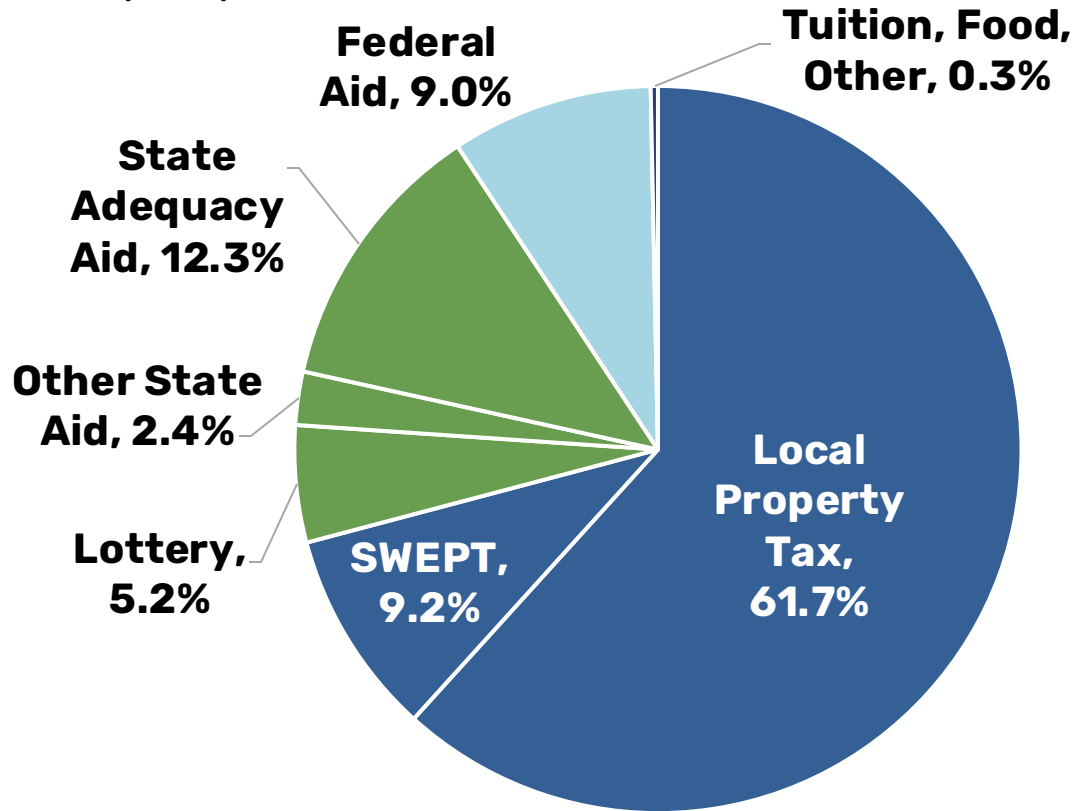
## Current System:

**\$4B in Total Revenue**

**Federal Aid: 9%**

**State Revenue: 19.9%**

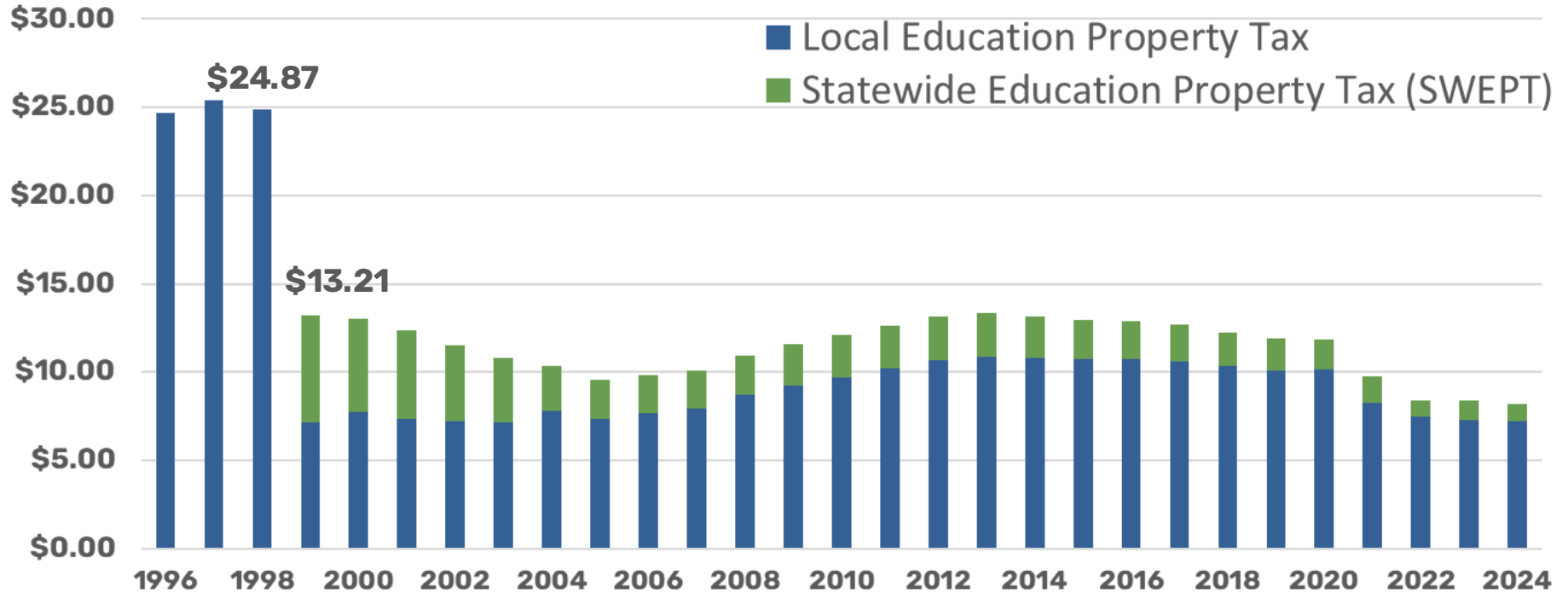
**Property Taxes: 70.9%**



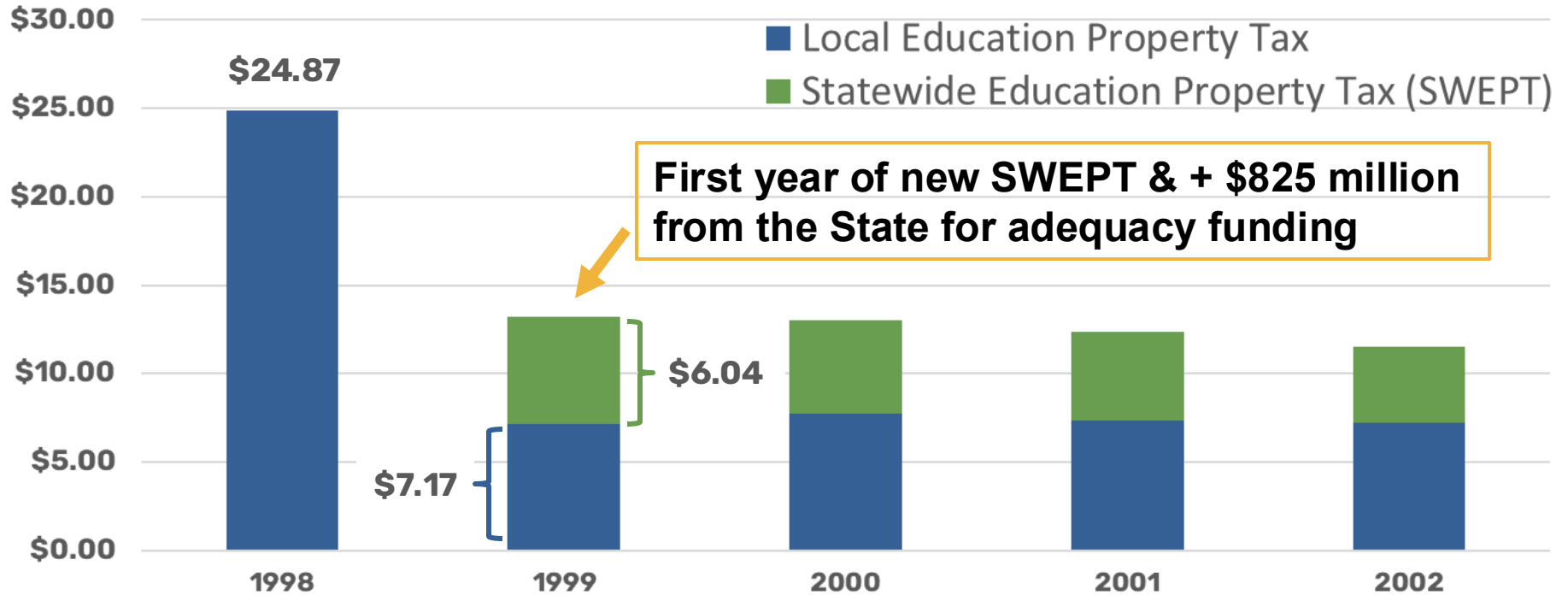
## Costs Are Outpacing Wage Increases

- Since June 2020, median sale price for a single-family home jumped from **\$340k to \$565k**.
- Since 2018, median rent for 2BR apartment jumped from **\$1,296 to \$2,024**.
- Median household income in New Hampshire did not cover basic costs for a four-person family in 2024, **falling nearly \$2,000 short**.
- Compared to a 2015 four-person family, a 2024 family had **over \$17,000 less in surplus income annually**.

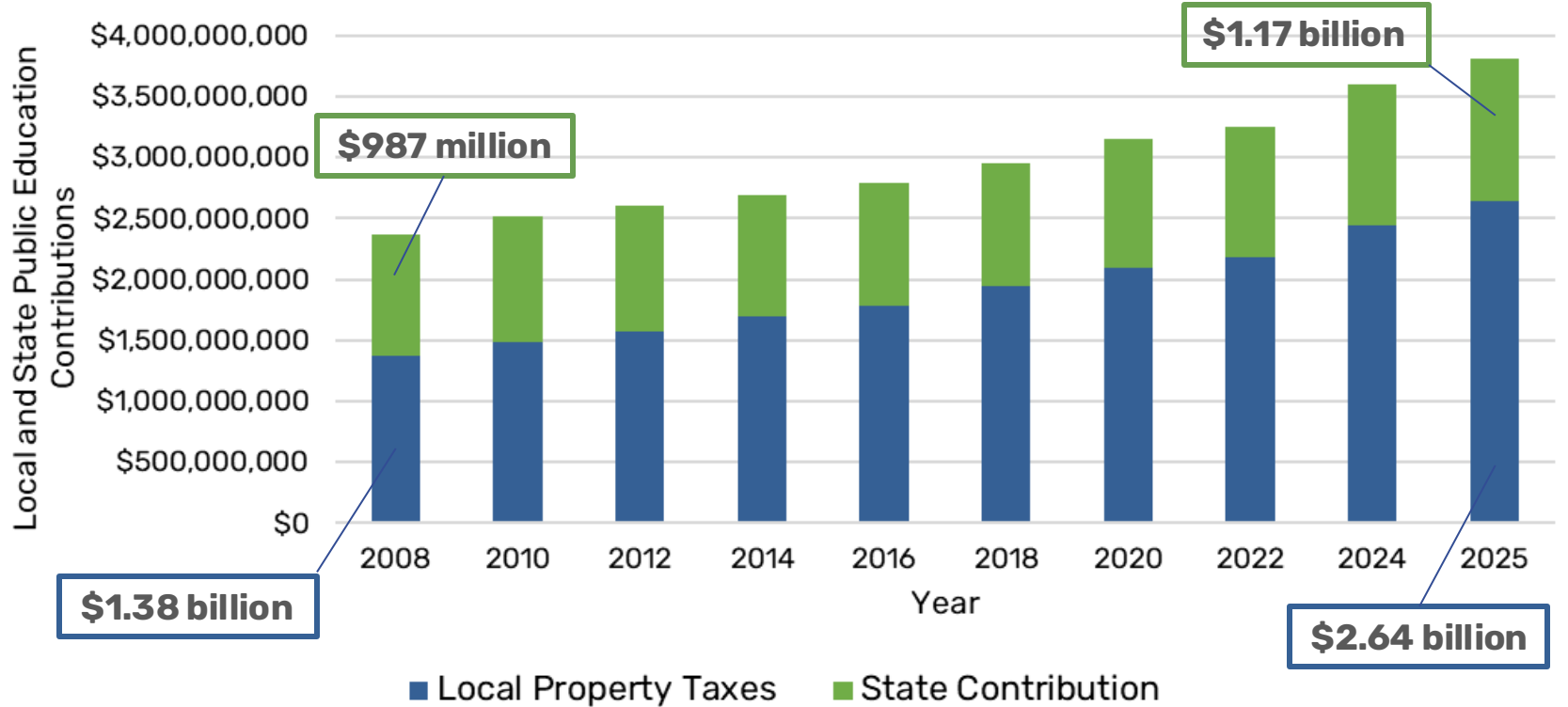
# NH Average Education Tax Rates 1996-2024/25



# NH Average Education Tax Rates 1996-2024/25



## Local and State Public Education Contributions Over Time



# Property Taxes Vary Wildly Across the State

	Median Household Income	Equalized Education Property Tax Rate	Amount Raised per pupil by education property taxes	Education Property Bill on \$500k House
Milford	\$94,514	\$11.44	\$18,464	\$5,720
Amherst	\$150,938	\$11.81	\$33,008	\$5,905
Manchester	\$77,415	\$6.18	\$9,504	\$5,110
Bedford	\$160,253	\$10.22	\$18,385	\$5,110
Portsmouth	\$105,756	\$5.32	\$27,424	\$2,660
New London	\$94,318	\$7.10	\$56,764	\$3,550

# The Claremont Rulings

In the 90s, 5 school districts sued the state to fight for education funding equality

The State must fund a **constitutionally adequate** education using a **uniform rate** across the state.



# Recent Rulings

Two new lawsuits have affirmed the State's responsibility to fund public education

## ConVal lawsuit:

Filed in 2019 and concluded with July 2025 NH Supreme Court Ruling in favor of the school districts.

## Rand lawsuit (2022):

Filed in 2022, recent August 2025 ruling in favor of the tax payers. State appealed to NH Supreme Court.

## July 2025 - ConVal Supreme Court Ruling

NH Supreme Court ruled that the State needs to provide at least \$7,356.01 per student as a “conservative minimum threshold”.

Milford would have seen an increase of **\$5,731,015** which could have **reduced property taxes by up to \$1,030** for a \$560k home.

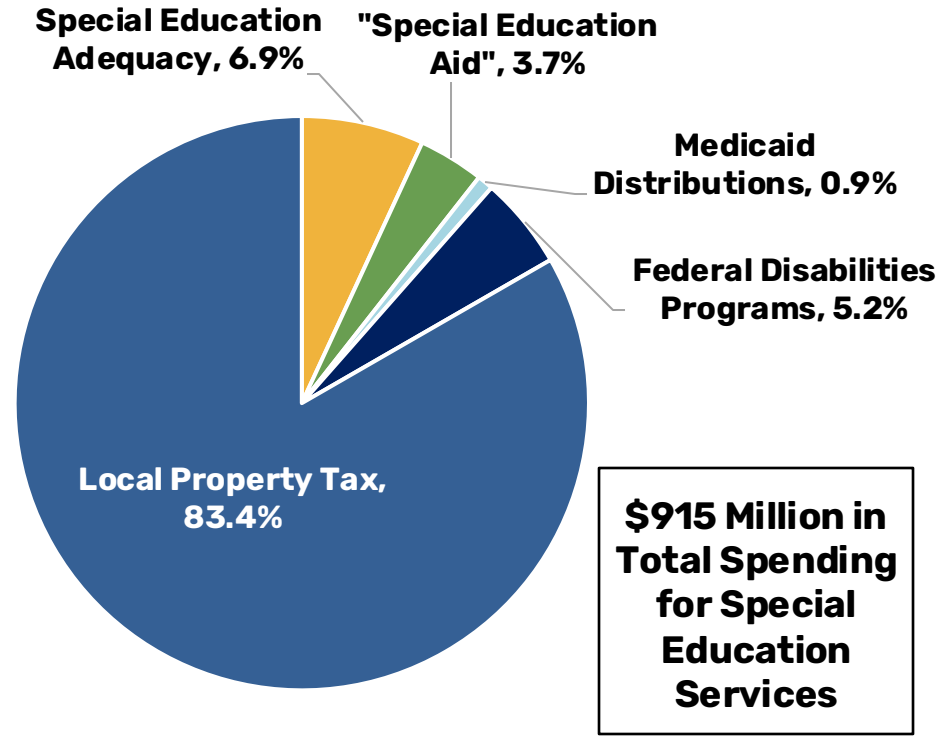
# August 2025 Rand Superior Court Ruling - "The Math Does Not Lie"

## Major Elements in Landmark Ruling

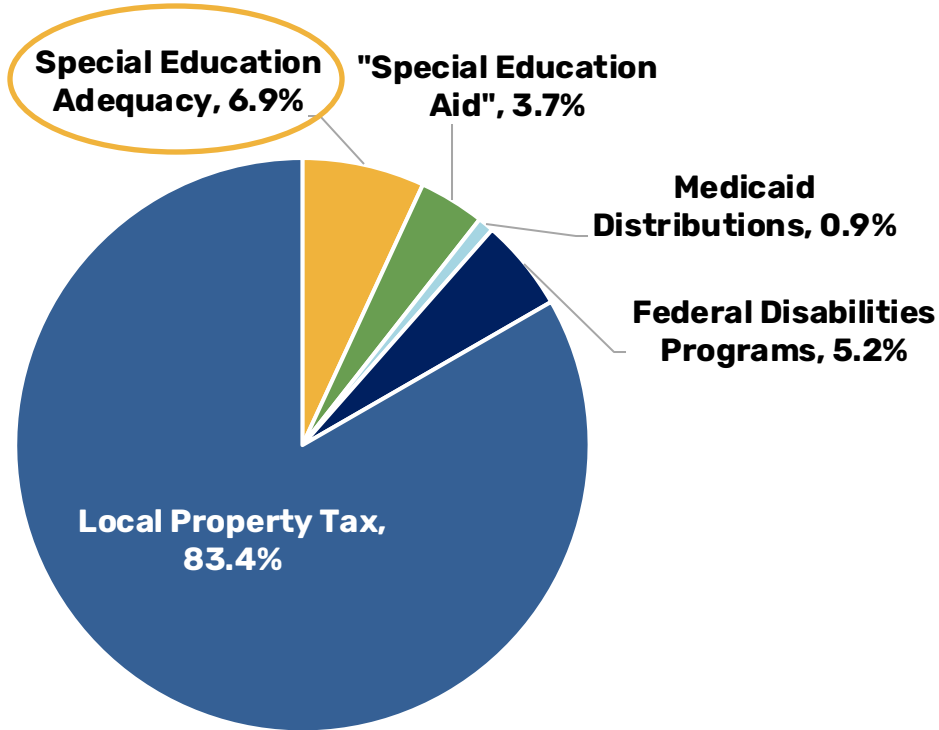
Minimal adequacy funding from the state, especially for **special education services**, is unconstitutional.

The lack of funding forces different property taxes across the state which is also unconstitutional.

State should **at least double** funding to districts to address these violations.



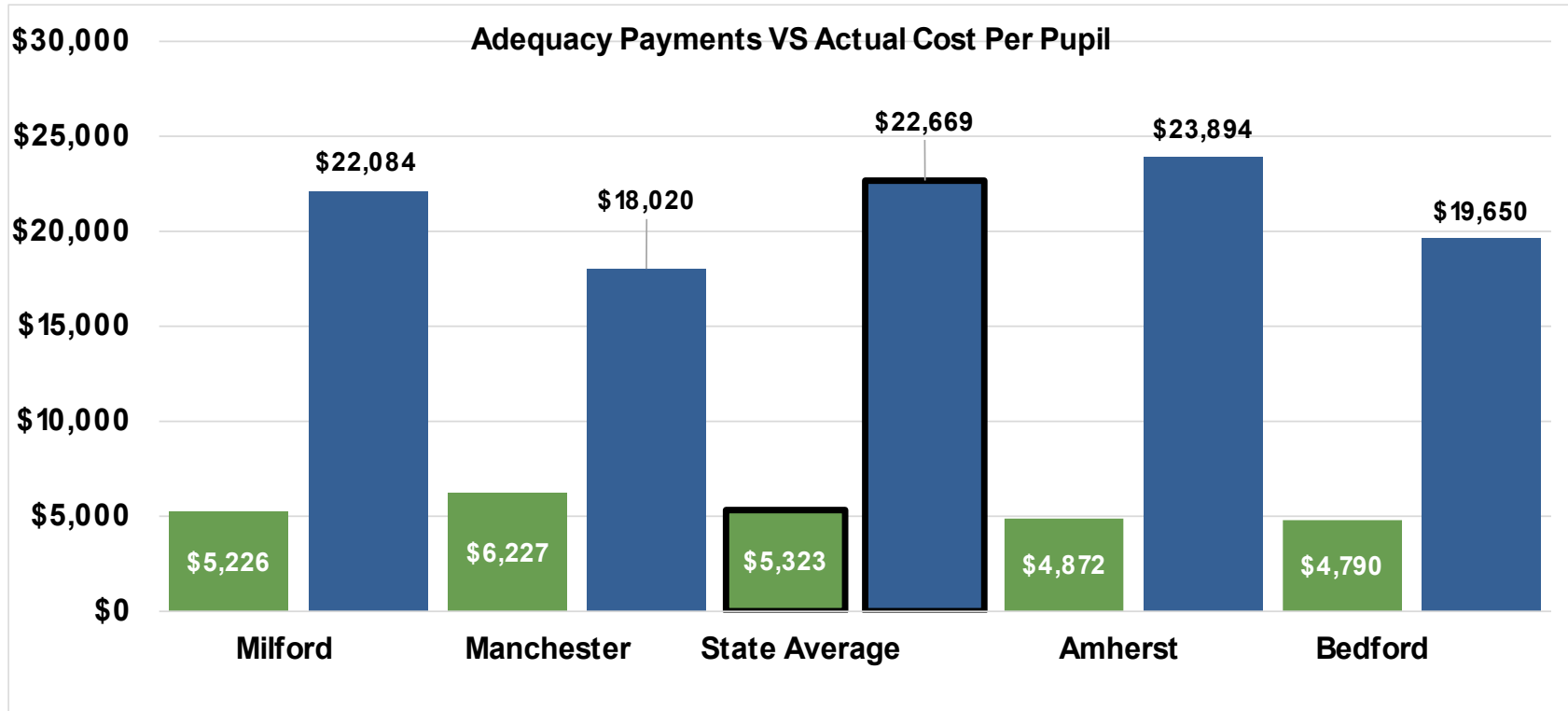
# The Consequences of Underfunding Special Education



**What happens when local residents must pay for most of these federally required services?**

- Taxpayers and districts are at odds
- Students become budget line items. Special education is viewed as a burden, not a protected right.
- Meeting student needs often means cutting the budget elsewhere
- Mid-year enrollments or changes make accurate budgeting difficult

# Current State Adequacy Grants Fall Well Short of Costs Communities Face in Educating Children

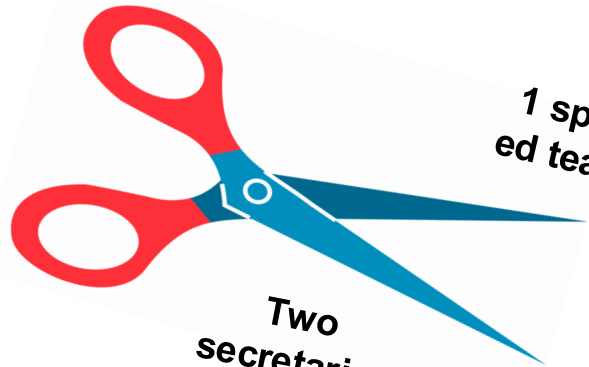


# Is the state's contribution enough to run a school district in the real world?

The 2023 Allenstown School District budget was **\$12.24 million**. This worked out to be about **\$24,200** per student. The State of NH only provided **\$2.42 million** to fund an adequate education.

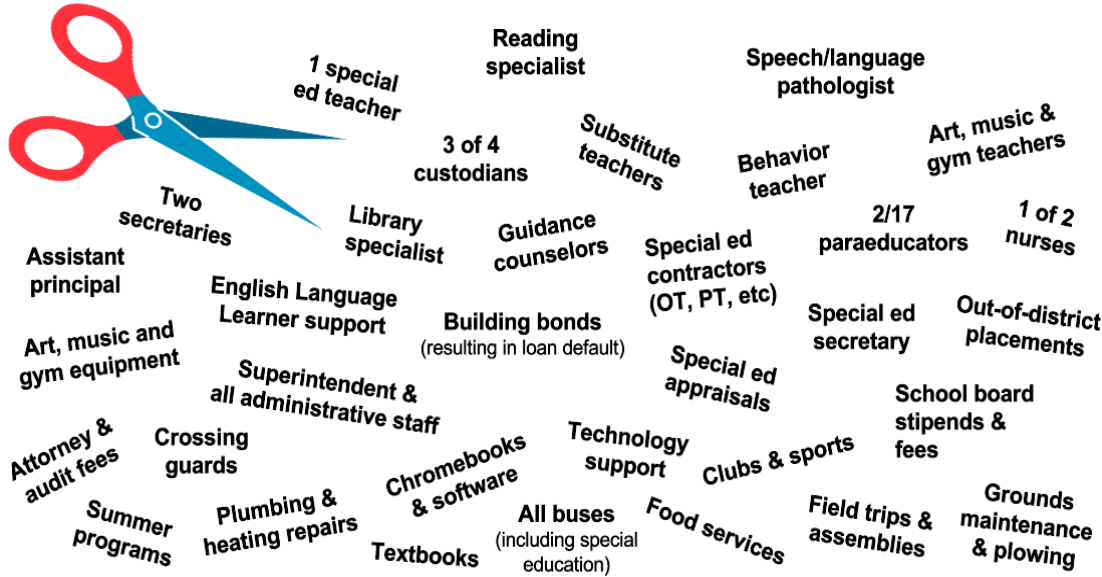
We asked Allenstown school administrators to create an imaginary school budget using **only this money from the state**.

This is what they had to cut to make the numbers work...



- 1 special ed teacher
- Reading specialist
- Speech/language pathologist
- 3 of 4 custodians
- Substitute teachers
- Behavior teacher
- Art, music & gym teachers
- Two secretaries
- Library specialist
- Guidance counselors
- Special ed contractors (OT, PT, etc)
- 2/17 paraeducators
- 1 of 2 nurses
- Assistant principal
- English Language Learner support
- Building bonds (resulting in loan default)
- Special ed secretary
- Out-of-district placements
- Art, music and gym equipment
- Superintendent & all administrative staff
- Special ed appraisals
- School board stipends & fees
- Attorney & audit fees
- Crossing guards
- Technology support
- Clubs & sports
- Summer programs
- Plumbing & heating repairs
- Chromebooks & software
- Food services
- Field trips & assemblies
- Grounds maintenance & plowing
- Textbooks (including special education)

# It still wasn't enough.



# What's left?

**Eliminate high school altogether.** An "adequate" education in Allenstown ends in the 8th grade.

**Cut teachers until:**

**K-4 grades have  
29 students/teacher ratio**

**5-8 grades have  
38 students/teacher ratio**

**How do State level  
policy decisions play a  
role in creating these  
inequities?**

# 125 New or Increased Fees Passed in 2025 State Budget

- New permits for maple syrup products
- Increased licensing fee per bed for nursing facilities
- Increased registration fees for cars, motorcycles, antique cars, antique motorcycles, vanity plates, mopeds, & more
- Increase registration fee for agricultural tractors, air compressors, log splitters, cement mixers & more

# HB 155 (2026) – Cutting the Business Enterprise Tax (BET)

- Average business paying BET would save estimated **\$47 per month**  
*Excluding businesses with more than \$18 million in taxable compensation the average savings are only **\$28 per month***
- Almost half of BET filers do not owe any BET which means no savings
- Largest 306 filers (average tax base of \$61.5 million each) would save estimated **\$2,561 per month**
- Will reduce revenue to the State by **more than \$26 million annually**

## **Business Tax Rate Reductions Led to Between \$795 Million and \$1.17 Billion in Forgone Revenue for Public Services Since 2015**

**“Prior research provides no evidence that reducing these tax rates increased revenue.”**

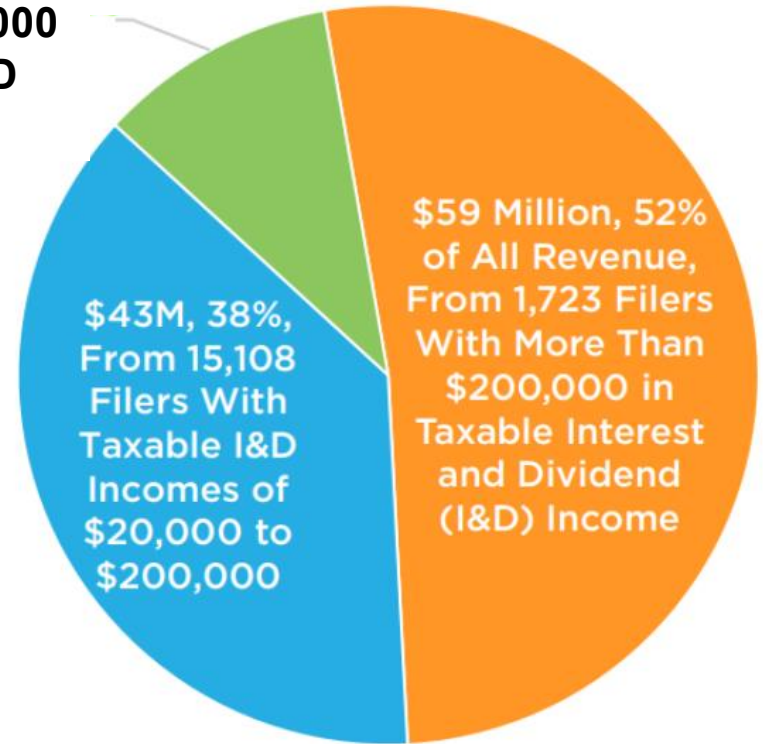
**“Business Tax Rate Reductions Generated Net Revenue Loss, Not an Increase”**

**“No Significant Statistical Relationship Exists Between Business Profits Tax Rates and Job Growth”**

**\$12M, 10%, From  
51,833 Filers With  
Less Than \$20,000  
in Taxable I&D  
Income**

# Repeal of Interest and Dividends Tax Disproportionately Benefits Wealthy NH Households

I&D brought in \$184.3 million in fiscal year 2024, according to unaudited figures from the Department of Administrative Services.



Source: New Hampshire Department of Revenue Administration, 2022 Annual Report

# Education Freedom Accounts: a voucher by any other name

## Vouchers come to NH

\$80k income threshold

**1,635** students enrolled

**\$8.0 million** program cost

**\$7.7 million over projection**

## Income threshold increased

\$105k threshold (family of 4)

**4,552** students enrolled

**\$23.8 million** program cost

**\$4 million over budget**

## Universal eligibility: SB295

No income restrictions

**10,510** students enrolled

**\$51.6 million** program cost

**\$12.3 million over budget**

*"This is really to help those less fortunate"*

2021: Senator Denise Ricciardi, Bedford

**2021**

**2022**

**2023**

**2024**

**2025**

## The program grows

No additional income proof

**3,110** students enrolled

**\$15.2 million** program cost

## Compliance review issues

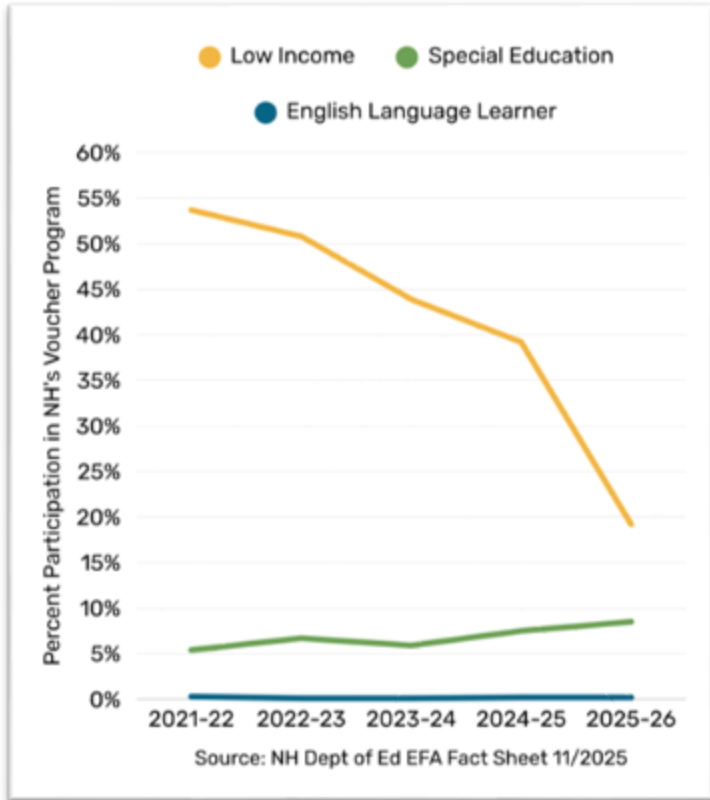
**25% of accounts have errors**

**5,765** student enrolled

**\$30.4 million** program cost

**\$10.6 million over budget**

# Who Are Vouchers Really For?

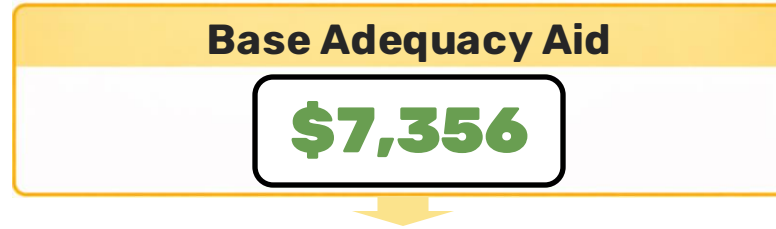


Legislators in 2021 originally pitched vouchers as a solution for lower income families who couldn't afford private school.

All income restrictions were eliminated in June 2025. The program doubled in size, driven mostly by wealthier families signing up for the first time.

92.8% of new voucher recipients this year were already in private or home school. Because they weren't attending public school to begin with, these students represent \$21.6 million in new costs to taxpayers.

# HB 651 – Killed by the NH House January 7, 2026



=

**Milford would have received an additional \$6.97 million per year which could have reduced property taxes on a \$500,000 home by up to \$1,122 per year**

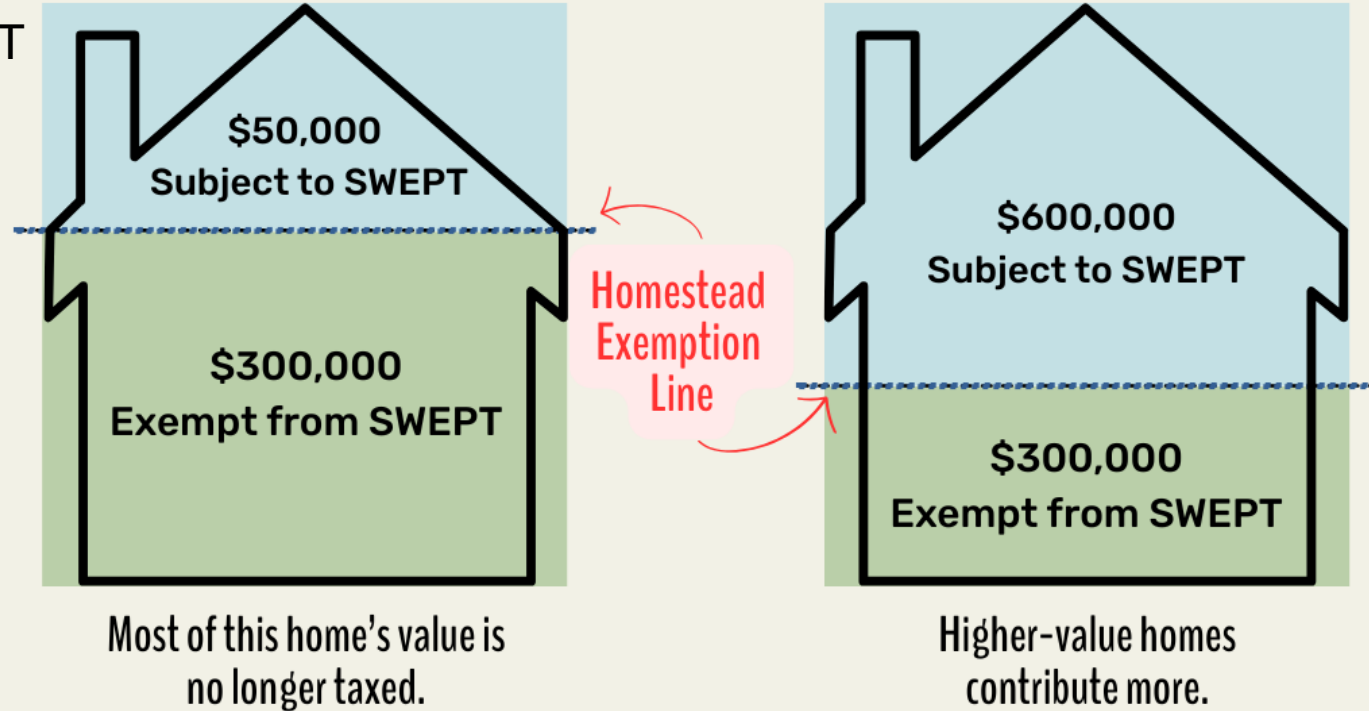
# School Budget & Tax Caps

- **HB 675** – statewide mandated school budget cap that would remove local control, lock in inequities, and not allow communities to respond to variable costs. Framed as the “property tax firewall” bill.
  - Copycat amendment stripped from the budget in 2025 by the full NH House.
  - Full bill killed by the full NH House January 2026.
- **HB 1300** – last minute, unrelated amendment added that aims to put a tax cap ballot question on every town and city each two years. If enacted, these caps would be nearly impossible to remove.
  - Significant opposition from school and municipal leaders.

**When talking about taxes, what do you think lawmakers should consider?**

# Statewide property tax – HB 1648

- Increases in SWEPT could provide significant funding
- Paired with a Homestead Exemption (like HB 1648) would shield most primary residents from any increases



# Reinstate Previous Revenue Sources that have been cut or eliminated

- Reinstating the Interest and Dividends Tax: **\$185 million a year.**
- Business tax cuts implemented between 2016 and 2024 resulted in a loss of \$1 billion in revenues, but that's over eight years, so **\$125 million each year.**
- Increase SWEPT, paired with property tax relief or exemptions, could raise about \$360 million for each \$1.00 per thousand of valuation increase.

# What would other sources of revenue raise?

- Revenue available for each 1% tax on federal adjusted gross income: ~\$768 million (IRS 2022 data)
- Revenue available for each 1% of a general sales tax: ~\$300 million (2023 data)
- Revenue available for each \$1.00 equalized property tax rate: ~\$360 Million. (2024 data).
- Legalizing marijuana is projected to produce \$25 to \$35 million in new revenues each year.
- Revenue available for each 1% tax on Capital Gains: ~\$80 million (IRS 2022 data)

# Legislative options to research other revenue options

- **HB 1636** – Directs State Department of Revenue Administration to provide lawmakers with usable data for options by showing revenue potential, taxpayer impacts, and ways to protect low- and moderate-income households.
- **HB 491** – Would have created a legislative committee just to begin discussing how to raise more revenue at the state level in order to reduce reliance on local property taxes. **Killed by the NH House January 2026.**

# What can be done?

- Contact your local legislators. Ask them how they plan to lower your property taxes.
- Write a letter to the editor
- Track the bills we're tracking: **[fairfundingnh.org/get-involved/legislation](https://fairfundingnh.org/get-involved/legislation)**
- Stay involved locally: attend School Board meetings and town meetings
- Follow us on social media
- Sign up for our newsletter and use our easy one-click advocacy tools

# The Stakes Are High

- **Last year:** 9 key chances to act — and the legislature didn't.
- **Missed opportunities** = millions lost in every community.
- **Court rulings + statewide school struggles** = a moment we can't waste in 2026.

# We Have Momentum

## Our 2025 Advocacy Effort



- **9,000+** contacts to legislators
- **30,107** sign-ins opposing HB 283\* (most in NH history)  
*\*this bill would have gutted the definition of an adequate education*
- **23** in-person testimonies statewide
- **14** Letters to the Editors in 6 publications
- **1,931** petition signatures from >200 NH cities & towns

# Local Leaders Are Stepping Up



**438 local officials** from **145 towns** signed on in 2025



Representing **71% of NH students**



Nearly **3x more signers** than in previous cycles

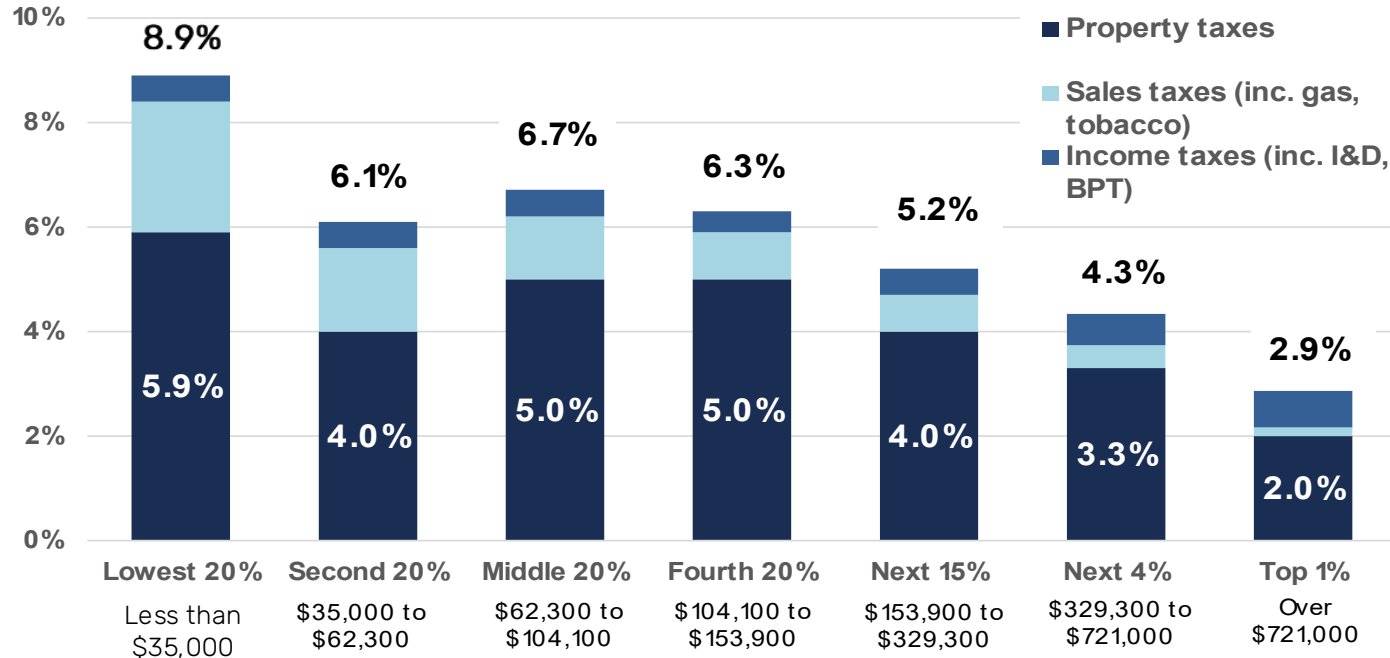


NH SCHOOL  
Funding Fairness  
Project

**THANK YOU**

# Property Tax Reliance Adds to Regressivity of New Hampshire's Tax System

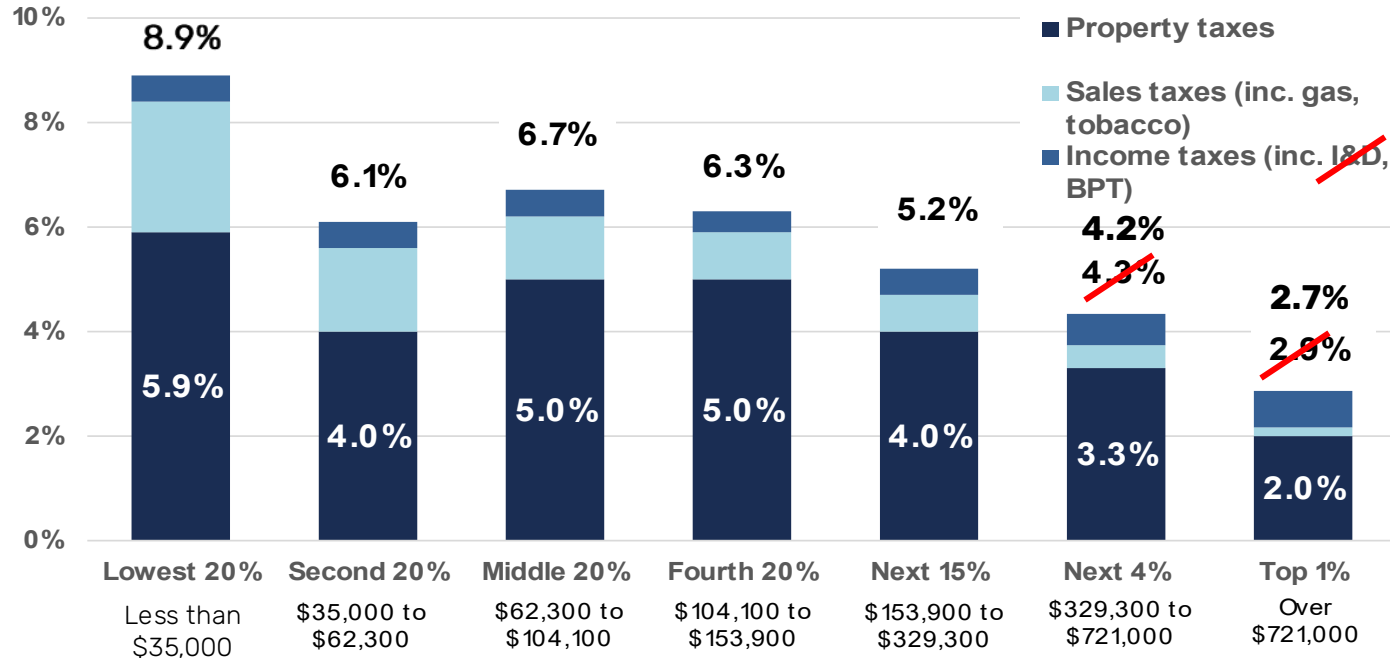
*Taxes as a Share of Income, by Income Group, 2024*



Source: Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy

# Property Tax Reliance Adds to Regressivity of New Hampshire's Tax System

*Taxes as a Share of Income, by Income Group, 2024*



Source: Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy

# Missed Opportunities in the 2025 Session

In 2025, there were multiple legislative proposals that would have significantly increased state adequacy funding to the Jaffrey-Rindge Cooperative School District, but none of them moved forward or were incorporated into the state budget.

- **HB 550** would have increased funding by an **estimated \$3.3 million** to the district through in line with the ConVal Supreme Court decision.
- **HB 651** would have increased funding by an **estimated \$4.3 million** to the district.
- **HB 603** would have increased funding by an **estimated \$6.6 million** to cover special education services.

# Possible Revenue Sources

## INCREASE CONTRIBUTION FROM SWEPT

Example revenue estimates:

- ConVal lawsuit base adequacy amount (\$9,929 per pupil)
  - SWEPT of about \$9\*\* per \$1,000
- ConVal Superior Court ruling base adequacy minimum (\$7,356.01) – SWEPT rate of about \$5\*\* per \$1,000

\*\* Would **dramatically offset** local property taxes for most communities

# Existing Low and Moderate Income Property Tax Relief Program

- In 2003, there were 27,207 claims granted (\$7.5 million)
- In 2021, just 5,572 claims averaging only **\$236** were granted
- In 2022 the total amount of relief provided for the entire state was only \$1.4 million
- The average property tax bill for Granite Staters was about **\$7,470** in 2021

# Summary

- Neither taxpayers nor students are treated equitably or fairly.
- State leaders are intentionally shifting dollars and blame to local schools, school boards, and property tax payers
- **\$2.8 Billion** is downshifted to local property tax payers each year.
- The current system is unconstitutional.
- The solution lies with state level lawmakers, but we need to engage with them to push for change and progress.



NH SCHOOL  
Funding Fairness  
Project

# **We can't afford another year of missed opportunities.**

The stage is set and it's time for the legislature to act.

# Current law

Beginning in the school year 2008-2009, and for each year thereafter, the specific criteria and substantive educational program that deliver the *opportunity for an adequate education* shall be defined and identified as the school approval standards in the following learning areas:

- (1) English/language arts and reading.
- (2) Mathematics.
- (3) Science.
- (4) Social studies, including civics, government, economics, geography, history, and Holocaust and genocide education.
- (5) Arts education, including music and visual arts.
- (6) World languages.
- (7) Health and wellness education, including a policy for violations of RSA 126-K:8, I(a).
- (8) Physical education.
- (9) Engineering and technologies including technology applications.
- (10) Personal finance literacy.
- (11) Computer science.

# HB 283 proposed cuts

Beginning in the school year 2008-2009, and for each year thereafter, the specific criteria and substantive educational program that deliver the *opportunity for an adequate education* shall be defined and identified as the school approval standards in the following learning areas:

- (1) English/language arts and reading.
- (2) Mathematics.
- (3) Science.
- (4) Social studies, ~~including civics, government, economics, geography, history, and Holocaust and genocide education.~~
- (5) ~~Arts education, including music and visual arts.~~
- ~~(6) World languages.~~
- (7) Health and wellness education, including a policy for violations of RSA 126-K:8, I(a).
- (8) Physical education.
- ~~(9) Engineering and technologies including technology applications.~~
- ~~(10) Personal finance literacy.~~
- ~~(11) Computer science.~~

# Opposition to HB 283

- 30,107 people from **every single city and town in New Hampshire** submitted opposition online.
- This is the most engagement on any bill ever. Only 71 were in support.



**Universal Opposition Turns Out for Change to Adequate Education**



**Epsom administrators say state rep misrepresented meeting cited as prompting bill that would diminish curriculum requirements**

# Misinterpretation of ConVal Ruling

*“A recent decision by Judge Ruoff in the Con-Val Lawsuit would mandate a \$500 million annual increase in Base Adequacy payments. This ruling has been appealed to the New Hampshire Supreme Court, where I believe it will be overturned. But if upheld, increasing Base Adequacy for every New Hampshire student to \$7,536.01 would likely force the Legislature to forego efforts to target additional aid to serve students with greater financial and education needs, such as those in poorer communities and with special education requirements.” –*  
Chair of Senate Education Committee

# Defining an Adequate Education

Per 193-E:2-a the specific criteria & substantive educational program that deliver the opportunity for an adequate education shall be defined & id'd as the school approval standards in the following

- (1) English/language arts and reading.
- (2) Mathematics.
- (3) Science.
- (4) Social studies, including civics, government, economics, geography, history, and Holocaust and genocide education.
- (5) Arts education, including music and visual arts.
- (6) World languages.
- (7) Health and wellness education, including a policy for violations of RSA 126-K:8, I(a).
- (8) Physical education.
- (9) Engineering and technologies including technology applications.
- (10) Personal finance literacy.
- (11) Computer science.

# What the State Thinks You Need to Provide an “Adequate” Education

Requirement	Cost (2008)
1 Teacher per 25 students K-2, per 30 students 3-12	
1 Specialist teacher for every 5 teachers	
1 Principal per 500 students	
1 Principal admin Assistant per 500 students	
1 Guidance Counselor per 400 students	
1 Library Media Specialist per 500 students	
1 Technology Coordinator per 1,200 students	
1 Custodian per 500 students	
Instructional Materials	
Technology	
Teacher Professional Development	
Facilities Operation and Maintenance	
Transportation	

# What the State Thinks You Need to Provide an “Adequate” Education

Requirement	Cost (2008)
1 Teacher per 25 students K-2, per 30 students 3-12	<b>\$47,267</b>
1 Specialist teacher for every 5 teachers	<b>\$47,267</b>
1 Principal per 500 students	<b>\$101,014</b>
1 Principal admin Assistant per 500 students	<b>\$42,177</b>
1 Guidance Counselor per 400 students	<b>\$51,867</b>
1 Library Media Specialist per 500 students	<b>\$47,267</b>
1 Technology Coordinator per 1,200 students	<b>\$47,267</b>
1 Custodian per 500 students	<b>\$36,628</b>
Instructional Materials	<b>\$250</b>
Technology	<b>\$75</b>
Teacher Professional Development	<b>\$20</b>
Facilities Operation and Maintenance	<b>\$195</b>
Transportation	<b>\$315</b>