

Legislative Report to Dover School Board. 3/4/24

Overview

There were 147 bills referred to the House Education Committee that is made up of 10 Democrats and 10 Republicans. There are many bills for and against school funding and the EFA program. Here are some highlights:

Bills that have passed the House

HB 396 (Judiciary) permits the classification of an individual based on biological sex under certain conditions (restrooms, locker rooms, prisons, and sports). Passed by 8 votes.

HB 1212 would increase the eligibility for free lunch meals to 350% of the federal poverty guidelines. The bill passed by a vote of 193-175 and was referred to Finance.

HB 1524 authorizes parents of special education children to observe them in the classroom setting. Passed by 2 votes. (This bill may violate other regulations.)

HB 1583 increases base adequacy aid and targeted aid to public schools by \$64 million. Base aid would increase by \$222 per student. Passed by a 228-150 vote and referred to Finance committee.

HB 1656 adds \$35 million to aid for special education students and differentiates their needs in three categories. Passed on voice vote and referred to Finance.

HB 1665 increases EFAs (vouchers) from 350% to 500% of the federal poverty guidelines. Passed by 1 vote and referred to Finance Committee. The chairman of Finance waived that referral, so the potential cost will not be reviewed. However, the Senate could do a cost analysis. Most of the increased cost will support children already in private or religious schools or home-schooled. Note: EFA amounts also go up whenever there is an increase in the adequacy formula.

Bills that failed in the House

HB 601 would permit NH to participate in the Medicaid direct certification program for Free and Reduced lunch. Failed by 1 vote. This would have made the process much easier for parents and would have likely increased enrollment.

HB 1128 would require the EFA program to be administered by a NH non-profit corporation instead of the current New York organization. Voted Indefinitely Postpone by 4 votes.

HB1206 would prohibit educator indoctrination of students. The bill failed in committee and is on the Consent Calendar.

HB 1356 would prohibit public school employees from using students preferred names and pronouns without parent permission. The bill failed in committee and is on the Consent Calendar.

HB 1377 (Labor) would allow workers to refrain from joining unions and paying agency fees. The bill failed and was voted Indefinitely Postpone by a 212–168 vote. The same bill is voted down every term.

HB 1419 would prohibit obscene or harmful sexual materials in schools. After a contentious debate the bill failed and was voted Indefinitely Postpone by a 187-162 vote. The bill can't come back this year.

HB 1473 would prohibit the teaching of curriculum or social-emotional learning in public schools. It failed in committee and is on the Consent Calendar.

HB 1634 would make all students eligible for the EFA program regardless of family income. The bill failed by 8 votes. It is the goal of many legislators (supported by outside groups) to pass universal vouchers in NH.

HB 1643 would require school districts to make all curriculum and instructional material available on their web pages. Failed in committee and is on Consent Calendar.

There are 11 state representatives for Dover and all our strong public education advocates. Our current representatives are: Luz Bay, Peter Bixby, Bill Conlin, Alan Howland, Jessica LaMontagne, Gail Pare, Peter Schmidt, Geoff Smith, Susan Treleaven, Janet Wall, and me. A twelfth representative will be elected on March 12.

Respectfully,

Tom Southworth
State Representative – District 11