

CITY COUNCIL PRINCIPLES FOR LEGISLATIVE POSITIONS:

PRINCIPLES FOR LEGISLATIVE POLICIES

The City Council has adopted Principles for Legislative Positions listed below in order for the Mayor and City Staff to be able to offer testimony to the Legislature in a timely manner on bills of interest to the City. The Principles for Legislative Positions are as follows:

1. Advocate to maintain local authority
2. Authorize local options
3. Support revenue streams to aid municipalities, specifically those that name Portsmouth or will directly support Portsmouth
4. Advocate for municipal representation on state committees
5. Support incentives for regional cooperation
6. Support plans to fund/support infrastructure
7. Support incentives for sustainability and increasing energy efficiency and increasing renewable energy production.
8. Support directing revenues to the purposes for which they are raised
9. Support measures that increase the efficiency of local government operations
10. Maintain and improve health, life and safety issues including protecting the safety of our First Responders
11. Encourage citizens to vote and support eliminating barriers to voting
12. Rely on locally generated financial data for decisions relating to local taxes and assessments
13. Protect local decision making about local zoning
14. Require the State to honor existing financial commitments to communities before new financial commitments are awarded, e.g. infrastructure reimbursements
15. Support the civil rights of individuals and oppose discrimination against any individual because of age, sex, race, creed, color, marital status, familial status, physical or mental disability, national origin, sexual orientation or gender identity
16. Use expertise and research in decision making
17. Support incentives relative to the construction of affordable housing

18. Support lobbying efforts of organizations and associations to which the City belongs and supports as a municipality, unless contrary to other city policies

19. Oppose legislation that does not apply scientific and technical standards that are broadly accepted by peer reviewed scientific study and can reasonably be achieved by sustainable best management practices and technology

20. Support legislation that provides education funding based on an equitable and sustainable framework and oppose the return of the donor town concept

Amended by adding # 20 by vote of the City Council February 19, 2019.



Education Coalition Communities 2.0 New Hampshire

www.CoalitionCommunitiesNH.com

Coalition Members

*Town of Bridgewater
Town of Center Harbor
Town of Carroll
Town of Hebron
Town of Holderness
Town of Hollis
Town of Jackson
City of Lebanon
Town of Lincoln
Town of Meredith
Town of Moultonborough
Town of New Castle
Town of New Durham
Town of Newbury
Town of Newington
City of Portsmouth
Town of Rye
Town of Sandwich
Town of Sugar Hill
Town of Sunapee
Town of Tuftonboro
Town of Waterville Valley
Town of Wolfeboro*

Joint Board

Nathan Lunney, Chair
City of Portsmouth
Paul Deschaine, Vice Chair
Town of Newington
Shannon Martinez, Clerk
Town of Sunapee
Rick James, Member
Town of Hebron
Terry Murphy, Member
Town of Bridgewater
Bonnie Moroney, Alternate
Town of Carroll
Judie Milner, Alternate
Town of Meredith

Statement of:

Nathan Lunney – Chair, Education Coalition Communities 2.0

Regarding:

NH House Ways & Means Committee

House Bill 1800 and House Bill 1787

February 4, 2026

Dear Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

My name is Nathan Lunney, and I am the City of Portsmouth's Deputy City Manager - Finance & Administration. I currently serve as Chair of the Education Coalition Communities 2.0, a group of 23 member cities and towns that have come together to ensure that any future education funding formula does not unfairly mandate that property tax **money raised in one town be sent to another town** by way of the Department of Revenue Administration.

Education Coalition Communities 2.0 stands in fundamental opposition to the provisions of HB 1800 and HB 1787 that would require all education property tax to be submitted to the state which would recreate an unfair funding scheme previously repealed in 2011 and rejected again last session.

On behalf of the members of the Education Coalition Communities 2.0, I offer our respectful **opposition to core elements** of both House Bill 1800 and House Bill 1787.

Please find my comments in bulleted items below hoping to make your review and consideration quicker and easier.

Impact on Local Taxation

- These bills would require municipalities to levy local property taxes as a “state tax,” then redistribute those funds with **no accountability** to local taxpayers.
- This would represent a major departure from the longstanding practice where **local property taxes fund local needs, particularly education**.
- These bills would reinstate the “**donor community**” model, which was short-lived and unsuccessful.

Broader Consequences for Municipalities and Schools

- Increased tax burdens could force towns and cities **to cut education** and municipal priorities **to avoid overall tax increases**.
- There could be potential negative impacts on education programs – contradicting the stated purpose of improving education funding.
- These bills would create winners and losers again, creating unfairness, and fostering tension among municipalities.

Additional Observations

- House Bill 1800 would unfairly increase the tax burden of specifically those property owners with students enrolled in local public schools.
- Both bills would create a lack of predictability for municipal budgeting.
- Education Coalition Communities 2.0 does not take a position on the tax credits or exemptions being proposed in either bill.
- The Coalition does generally support tax relief for property owners and would support the bill provisions to study property tax relief.

House Bills 1800 and 1787 would create an **unfair distribution of property taxes**, previously rejected for good reason. Education Coalition Communities 2.0 supports a **fair, comprehensive, and accountable** approach to education funding that commits locally raised taxes to support local education spending.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Education Coalition Communities 2.0 stands ready to work with you and your committee as you work to address this very challenging issue.



February 3, 2026

Sen. James Gray, chairman
Senate Finance Committee
107 N Main Street, Room 103
Concord, NH 03301

RE: SB 605 - relative to special assessment requests from pooled risk management programs.

Dear Chairman Gray and members of the Committee,

We, the undersigned mayors, are writing in support of SB 605, which makes logical, reasonable, and transparent changes to the state's role in overseeing health insurance risk pools.

SB 605 allows two distinct models of risk pools to exist in New Hampshire: assessable and non-assessable. This distinction is consistent with the Association of Governmental Risk Pools (AGRIP) standards, which recognizes both models of risk pool. This bill provides clarity to local governments, helping them decide which model best suits their needs.

A clear illustration of why this legislation is needed occurred last summer, when many school districts and a few towns received large "surprise bills" from two of the three health insurance risk pools operating in the state, one of which has since ceased operations.

While we support the concept that political subdivisions participating in assessable risk pools should have a reasonable timeframe to pay assessments, we are neutral on the 36-month period contained in SB 605.

With health insurance being a huge driver of municipal costs, regularly outpacing inflation, clarifying the regulatory scheme is crucial and we support SB 605 as a common-sense solution that protects municipalities, public employees covered through risk pools, and ultimately property taxpayers.

Thank you for your consideration.

Regards,

Mayor Dale Girard, Claremont

Mayor Byron Champlin, Concord

Mayor Dennis Shanahan, Dover

Mayor Jay Kahn, Keene

Mayor Mike Bordes, Laconia

Mayor Deaglan McEachern, Portsmouth



February 4, 2026

Rep. John Hunt, chairman
House Commerce and Consumer Affairs Committee
One Government Place, Room 229
Concord, NH 03301

RE: HB 1491 - relative to pooled risk management programs.

Dear Chairman Hunt and members of the Committee,

We, the undersigned mayors, are writing in support of HB 1491, which makes logical, reasonable, and transparent changes to the state's role in overseeing health insurance risk pools.

HB 1491 allows two distinct models of risk pools to exist in New Hampshire: assessable and non-assessable. Assessable pools will remain under the authority of the Secretary of State, while non-assessable pools will shift oversight to the Department of Insurance (DOI). This distinction is consistent with the Association of Governmental Risk Pools (AGRIP) standards, which recognizes both models of risk pool. It is also consistent with how pools have operated in our state for decades. This bill provides clarity to local governments, helping them decide which model best suits their needs.

HB 1491 includes enhanced disclosures for both risk pool models and equips regulators with stronger enforcement tools than those currently in place. Both models have clear reserve level requirements, eliminating ambiguity, and mandate actions to be taken if reserves fall too low, ensuring the financial security of the public sector.

A clear illustration of why this legislation is needed occurred last summer, when many school districts and a few towns received large "surprise bills" from two of the three health insurance risk pools operating in the state, one of which has since ceased operations.

With health insurance being a huge driver of municipal costs, regularly outpacing inflation, clarifying the regulatory scheme is crucial and we support HB 1491 a common-sense solution that protects municipalities, public employees covered through risk pools, and ultimately property taxpayers.

Thank you for your consideration.

Regards,

Mayor Dale Girard, Claremont

Mayor Byron Champlin, Concord

Mayor Dennis Shanahan, Dover

Mayor Jay Kahn, Keene

Mayor Mike Bordes, Laconia

Mayor Deaglan McEachern, Portsmouth



February 2, 2026

Senator William Gannon
Chairman, Senate Judiciary
State House, Room 124
107 North Main Street
Concord, NH 03301

RE: SB 626 - restricting right-to-know requests to persons domiciled or maintaining a permanent residence in New Hampshire and requiring proof of domicile or residency to file right-to-know requests.

Dear Senator Gannon,

We, the undersigned mayors, support SB 626, when amended by Amendment 2026-0403s. There are several reasons we support this bill as amended.

Clarification will affirm the intent of Right to Know/RSA 91-A. Establishing a definition of “citizen” in the Right to Know Law/RSA 91-A will ensure the right to transparency of government rests with those governed by it. This concept aligns with the New Hampshire Constitution and the statutory intent of RSA Chapter 91-A as established in 1967.

Ambiguity will be eliminated. Establishing a definition of “citizen” in RSA 91-A will, once and for all, settle any confusion and do it in a way that is consistent with the constitution and statutory intent of 91-A. It will allow public entities to filter access to governmental records in a way that continues to ensure New Hampshire citizens have guaranteed access to those records and prevent out-of-state individuals and bad faith actors from overwhelming the available resources of public entities with burdensome or irrelevant requests not meant to hold the government accountable to the people it governs.

Ease of implementation and consistency. A definition that references RSA 654:12, I(c) would mean a person would use the same or analogous documents that prove a person’s domicile to assert their right to vote in New Hampshire to support their right to request governmental records in New Hampshire, if challenged.

Transparency is preserved. Defining “citizen” will simply protect the intent of the law by saying: if you live here or own property here, you have every right to know what **your** government is doing. If you do not live in New Hampshire, the same level of access does not automatically apply. It limits frivolous or burdensome requests from those with no connection to NH, while preserving access for those who live, vote, and pay taxes here.

Maintains Media Access. Defining the term “citizen” will have no impact on the ability of media, which is already defined by RSA 91-A:4, IX, to request records under New Hampshire’s Right-to-Know Law.

In sum, SB 626, as amended, will maintain transparency for those entitled to it, the citizens of New Hampshire and allow public entities to respond to those looking to hold their government accountable, not those looking to data mine.

Thank you for your consideration and please feel free to reach out should you have any further questions.

Regards,

Mayor Dale Girard, Claremont

Mayor Byron Champlin, Concord

Mayor Dennis Shanahan, Dover

Mayor Mike Bordes, Laconia

Mayor Jim Donchess, Nashua

Mayor Deaglan McEachern, Portsmouth

Mayor Chuck Grassie, Rochester

Cc: Members of Senate Judiciary