

Granite State Priorities

PO Box 3431, Concord, NH 03302 (603) 986-7696
www.gspriorities.org info@gspriorities.org

January 17, 2012

The Honorable Kenneth Weyler, Chairman
House Finance Committee

Re: HB 1638

Dear Representative Weyler and Committee Members:

Reaching over 80,000 people across the state, Granite State Priorities is a nonpartisan, non-profit 501(c)(3) organization that brings citizens together to achieve common-sense fiscal reforms that will sustain our state and communities while making taxes affordable for all.

Granite State Priorities urges the committee to recommend HB 1638 Ought to Pass.

The citizens of New Hampshire and the legislators they elect to represent them have always taken very seriously the challenge of maintaining the fundamental priorities of our state while keeping our tax burden low. This challenge has been particularly acute in the recession and slow recovery in recent years.

At every level of government in our state, we carefully weigh our priorities against questions about their cost: How much does it cost? Are we doing it as efficiently as possible? Is this a priority best provided by government? If so, which level of government—state, county, local, or perhaps some combination? Are some things that we have traditionally decided to pool our resources to provide together, at one level of government or another, better provided by families or individuals themselves? Are there some things for which it makes more sense to pool our resources, to provide at one level of government or another, than it does to expect families or individuals to provide for themselves?

People of good will can disagree about the role of government in meeting the fundamental needs and expectations of our society. Every state—for that matter, every human civilization—has done things differently; and we also change our policies with changing times and conditions.

But citizens of the Granite State still fundamentally agree that we want a public sector to provide certain infrastructures, programs and services, and we accept the responsibility of finding a way to pay for those things we agree we need.

For many years and many reasons, including but not limited to the recent recession, our state budgets have been shifting responsibilities/costs traditionally born by the state to other levels of government, to other sectors of society, and to individuals. This is not necessarily inherently wrong. It is a responsible government that attends to changing circumstances and responds and adapts.

Yet it is a decidedly inefficient and ineffective state government that makes these changes abruptly, without planning. Budgeting, whether by state, city, town, school board, or a family or a business, requires a certain basic level of predictability to be effective. By establishing a commission to study and recommend standards for cost shifting, by providing our state a way, outside the heat of budget debates, to consider and deliberate the important, ongoing questions of who best pays for what, HB 1638 can help provide this necessary predictability.

Because this bill offers a necessary and practical step toward ensuring our state government is as responsible and effective as it can be in fulfilling its fundamental obligations, we urge the committee to recommend it Ought to Pass.

Respectfully,

Cathy Silber
Executive Director

Granite State Priorities is a nonpartisan, nonprofit, 501(c)3 organization whose members include American Friends Service Committee NH, Episcopal Diocese of New Hampshire, Every Child Matters in NH, League of Women Voters of New Hampshire, NEA-New Hampshire, Northern New England District Unitarian Universalist Association, State Employee's Association (SEIU Local 1984), United Church of Christ, Commission for Witness and Action, and over 1,000 individuals across the state.