

# Granite State Priorities

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January 23, 2012

The Honorable Nancy Stiles, Chairman  
Senate Education Committee

Re: SB 372

Senator Stiles 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 SB 372 Inexpedient to Legislate.**

Granite State Priorities believes that we come together as a community to build and maintain the foundations of our society. We accept our shared responsibility for maintaining the public sector with the understanding that our tax dollars are dedicated to supporting the public interest.

Taxes are the tools we use to fund the things we do together as a state. Their purpose is to provide a public benefit. Tax credits, when they are used, should have a public purpose. For example, the federal child care tax credit helps more people be able to work and contribute to the economy, including paying their share of taxes. SB 372 diverts our tax dollars away from public purposes and into private ones—without providing a public benefit. In fact, SB 372 spends public money on undermining public education.

Passing this bill would increase local property taxes. New Hampshire school districts need the funding they currently receive. State adequacy funding provides only about a third of the true cost of educating our children. Further, any monies taken from districts to follow the child to a private or religious school don't have a close correlation to the services required to continue school operations for remaining children. Losing 10 students in a K-5 elementary school with two classes of each grade doesn't let you close a classroom and get rid of the teacher, an administrator or the school nurse. So the local costs don't go down as the state aid is being reduced. The only other way to keep the schools going would be to raise local property taxes.

Public education is one of our most important public purposes, fundamental to our democracy and our American success as a meritocracy. With public education, *everyone* gets the opportunity to succeed.

Public education was created to benefit every individual student. The challenge of making a good public education available to every child lies in the imperative to serve every single child, of every attention span, every ability or disability, every learning style, every advantage or disadvantage. This

sets public education apart from home schooling or private or religious schools, with their narrower focus and mission.

But the real benefit of public education extends beyond what any individual students reaps from it. Public education exists as a public good for what our society as a whole gains from it: an educated workforce as a whole, an educated electorate as a whole, a successful society as a whole. A land of opportunity, where everyone has the opportunity to succeed.

By diverting our tax dollars away from public education and into educational endeavors with narrower, more limited missions, SB 372 undermines public education and, with it, the public interest.

Granite State Priorities believes that the best way to make a quality education available to every single child in the state is to invest the resources that this requires. Right now, our state relies on taxes that are unaffordable for many people and this helps foster a sense that taxes are wrong. But better options are available, options that would raise the revenues we need to maintain our state's priorities and, at the same time, make taxes affordable for everyone, with everyone paying their share, no more, and no less.

Because SB 372 uses public money to undermine public education, Granite State Priorities urges the committee to recommend it Inexpedient to Legislate.

Respectfully,

Carol Backus, president

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.