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Press Release



For Immediate Release

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Contact:

Communications Office
(603)271-2121

Governor Maggie Hassan released the following message after today vetoing House Bill 1637

CONCORD – Governor Maggie Hassan released the following message after today vetoing House Bill 1637:

"By the authority vested in me, pursuant to part II, Article 44 of the New Hampshire Constitution, on June 9, 2016, I have vetoed House Bill 1637, relative to school attendance in towns with no public schools.

"House Bill 1637 diverts taxpayer money to private and religious schools with no accountability or oversight, a clear violation of the New Hampshire Constitution, which states, '... no money raised by taxation shall ever be granted or applied for the use of the schools of institutions of any religious sect or denomination.' Not only is the bill unconstitutional, it also has no mechanism to ensure a student's constitutional right to the opportunity to receive an adequate education and would undermine the state's efforts to ensure a strong and robust public education system for all New Hampshire students.

"Under current New Hampshire law, public schools are required to provide the opportunity for an adequate education, as defined by the Legislature, and are held accountable through laws and rules that require monitoring and review by the Department of Education. Additionally, as required by statute and as a result of Supreme Court decisions requiring a statewide education accountability system, New Hampshire schools are required to participate in the Statewide Educational Improvement and Assessment Program. If House Bill 1637 is enacted, public funds would be used to send students to private schools – which are only approved by the Department of Education for attendance and not curriculum, without the same accountability standards as the public schools – violating the requirements of state law and the state Constitution.

"In addition, House Bill 1637 interferes with tuition agreements between school districts throughout the state and potentially removes voters from the approval process for those agreements. It allows school districts that do not have public schools for every grade level to assign a student to or enter into a contract with a private school, but this is not necessary, because under current New Hampshire law, school districts that do not have their own public school are able to enter into tuition agreements with other school districts – many of which are multi-year contracts. It is common practice for these tuition agreements to go before the town voters to approve the terms of the contract – a provision not provided for in this proposed law.

"The National Education Association, the New Hampshire School Administrators Association and the New Hampshire School Boards Association all opposed this legislation. The National Education Association wrote, 'The bill creates an unlimited and unregulated local voucher program with enormous opportunities for discrimination and inequality,' and the school administrators wrote, 'This proposed law is substantially flawed and would expose the school districts and their citizens to likely costly litigation.'

"House Bill 1637 clearly violates the explicit language of New Hampshire's Constitution. It also would undercut every New Hampshire public school student's constitutional right for the opportunity for an adequate education, with strong accountability from the school. Because it is unconstitutional, undermines our efforts to ensure a strong and robust public education system for all New Hampshire students and interferes with tuition agreements between school districts throughout the state, I have vetoed House Bill 1637."

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