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NHSBA Legislative Update – March 17, 2017

SB 193: This bill was heard for a second time by the full Senate on Thursday March 16, 2017. The Senate voted OUGHT TO PASS on February 23, 2017. SB 193 was then sent to the Senate Finance Committee. Upon referral from Senate Finance, the full Senate again voted OUGHT TO PASS by a vote of 14-9.

This act creates a voucher system, diverting public money away from public schools and instead creating a system whereby public money can be used to pay tuition at private schools, including religious schools.

NHSBA provided written testimony in opposition to this bill. NHSBA referenced Resolutions I:A and I:B in our written opposition. NHSBA also opined that this bill seeks to create a voucher system that would purposely and systematically cut state funding to local school districts, depriving them of necessary and valuable fiscal resources needed to provide an adequate education to New Hampshire's students. This bill will negatively impact local school districts and school boards by diverting scarce fiscal resources away from local school districts. NHSBA also, cited recent cuts of state funding to the NH Retirement System, building aid, and shortfalls in catastrophic aid reimbursements.

The following bills were heard by the House Education Committee on Wednesday March 15, 2017:

SB 45, an act requiring a course in civics for high school graduation. NHSBA did not testify on this bill and has no position on this matter.

SB 101-FN, an act relative to enrollment eligibility for regional career and technical education programs. NHSBA did not testify on this bill and has no position on this matter.

SB 104, an act relative to career and technical education. NHSBA did not testify on this bill and has no position on this matter.

SB 103, an act limiting food and beverage advertising and marketing on school property. NHSBA did not testify on this bill and has no position on this matter.

SB 43, an act relative to non-academic surveys administered by a public school to its students. NHSBA testified in opposition to this bill. This bill provides that no student shall be required to volunteer or submit to a non-academic survey or questionnaire without written consent of a parent or legal guardian. The bill also creates an exception to this requirement for the youth risk behavior survey developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

NHSBA's opposition to this bill is based on the following NHSBA Continuing Resolution:

NHSBA supports language in legislation that provides parents' rights to opt-out of content and programs that they feel are not appropriate for their child(ren). However, NHSBA opposes language requiring parents to opt-in to content and programs for their child(ren). Opt-in language creates undue burden on the school district to account for every student who would participate, versus the few who choose not to participate. (2017)

NHSBA also testified that no notice provision or procedure is foolproof – some parents don't have internet access, some parents don't have cell phones, some parents don't have transportation, some parents are transient. As such, the language of this bill does not adequately address the simple fact that reaching all parents is not always possible.

Additionally, NHSBA testified that the definition of "survey" and "questionnaire" is sufficiently vague such that it would not allow school districts to poll students about mundane non-academic activities – prom themes, location of student events, and so forth.

SB 44, an act prohibiting the state from requiring implementation of common core standards. NHSBA did not testify on this bill and has no position on this matter.

SB 8-FN, an act relative to school attendance in towns with no public schools. This bill, often referred to as the "Croydon Bill" and mirrors HB 557. HB 557: An act relative to school attendance in towns with no public schools. This bill allows a school district to assign a child to another public school in another school district or to an approved private school if there is no public school for the child's grade in the child's resident district. The bill also allows a school board to make a contract with a private school to provide for the education of a child who resides in a district which does not have a public school at the child's grade level.

Due to scheduling conflicts, NHSBA was not able to testify on SB 8. However, NHSBA opposes this bill, just as NHSBA opposed HB 557. NHSBA will provide written testimony to the House Education Committee relative to this bill.