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NH Legislative Update – March 3, 2017

Dear Members –

This was an unusually slow week at the New Hampshire legislature, with only a handful of bills heard in committee. Aside from the few bills listed herein, please pay particular attention to a few “Action Item” bills listed below. NHSBA urges its members to contact their local representatives regarding these bills.

HB 584: An act relative to chartered public school funding. This bill provides that funding for chartered public school pupils shall be based on a percentage of the most recently available statewide average cost per pupil for public school pupils. This bill would fund chartered public schools at 55% of the state average cost per pupil for public school pupils as calculated on July 1 each year. This bill was heard in executive session by the House Finance Committee on February 28, 2017. The House Finance Committee voted INEXPEDIENT TO LEGISLATE by a vote of 24-1.

HB 413: An act relative to payment by the state of a portion of retirement system contributions of political subdivision employers. This bill provides that the state shall pay 15 percent of contributions of retirement system employers other than the state for group I teachers and group II members. This bill was recommended as OUGHT TO PASS by the House Executive Departments and Administration on February 15, 2017. The House Finance Committee was scheduled to hold work sessions on this bill on February 28, 2017 and March 2, 2017. No action was taken at these work sessions.

HB 356: An act establishing a committee to study education funding and the cost of an opportunity for an adequate education. This bill establishes a committee to study education funding and the cost of an opportunity for an adequate education. This bill was heard in a work session of a subcommittee (Division II) of the House Finance Committee on February 28, 2017 and March 2, 2017. The Division II subcommittee recommended OUGHT TO PASS by a vote of 7-0. The bill is now referred back to the full House Finance Committee for consideration.

HB 647: An act establishing education savings accounts for children with disabilities. This bill seeks to create a voucher system for children with disabilities and seeks to divert state adequacy aid away from public schools. This bill was heard in a work session (Division II subcommittee) of the House Finance Committee on February 28, 2017 and March 2, 2017. On March 3, 2017, the Division II subcommittee voted to recommend INEXPEDIENT TO LEGISLATE by a vote of 6-1. The bill will now move to the full House Finance Committee for consideration.

Important Hearings Scheduled for Next Week:

HB 103: Scheduled to be heard by the Senate Education Committee on Tuesday March 7, 2017. This bill requires school districts to provide advance notice to parents and legal guardians of course material involving discussion of human sexuality or human sexual education. NHSBA testified in opposition to this bill when it was initially heard by the House Education Committee in January. Based on a newly adopted NHSBA Resolution (2017), NHSBA recognizes the right of parents to “opt-out” of specific course material, but NHSBA believes “opt-in” requirements place an onerous task on school administrators.

HB 166: Scheduled to be heard by the Senate Education Committee on Tuesday March 7, 2017. This bill amends the schedule for a school district to administer the statewide assessment and requires a school district to develop and administer an assessment in those years in which the statewide assessment is not administered. NHSBA did not testify on this bill when it was before the House Education Committee, as NHSBA has no official position on this matter.

NHSBA Action Items:

NHSBA urges its members to please contact their local representatives about the following bills. Legislators can be found here:

<http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/house/members/housemembers.html>

E-mail addresses for individual legislators can be found on their individual profile pages.

HB 557: This bill seeks to allow public adequacy aid to be used for tuition at private schools. This bill will be heard before the full New Hampshire House of Representatives on either Wednesday March 8, 2017 or Thursday March 9, 2017. NHSBA opposes this bill based on the following NHSBA Resolutions:

I:A• NHSBA supports the utilization of public education funds solely for public school purposes as determined by the local school boards. (1991)

I:B• NHSBA urges the NH Legislature and Congress to oppose any efforts to subsidize elementary or secondary private, religious or home schools with public tax dollars. Specifically, NHSBA opposes the creation of vouchers, tax credits and tax subsidies that in any form are targeted to the tuition or expenses for non-public K-12 schools. Rather than diverting scarce tax dollars away from our public school classrooms, NHSBA urges the NH Legislature and Congress to support improvements in our public schools and meet current funding obligations and promises, benefiting the vast majority of America's children who are educated daily in our public schools. (2005)

Additionally, NHSBA has concerns that public adequacy money will be used for tuition purposes to private schools, when such private schools are under no obligation to provide an "adequate education" as defined by the NH Legislature.

NHSBA urges its members to contact their local representatives and ask them to OPPOSE HB 557.

HB 441: This bill seeks to add to RSA 91-A:3 (nonpublic sessions) a provision stating that information relative to the initial screening of applicants for employment may be conducted in non-public session. This bill seeks to codify statute to clarify issues raised in the recent Dover Supreme Court case, in which the New Hampshire Supreme Court ruled that applicant scoring sheets used during a superintendent search are exempt from disclosure.

NHSBA supports HB 441 and asks its members to contact their local representatives and ask them to SUPPORT HB 441.