

Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee

Matthew Schelzi 271-3266

SB 596-FN, prohibiting smoking in Hampton Beach State Park.

Hearing Date: January 20, 2026

Time Opened: 9:12 a.m.

Time Closed: 9:24 a.m.

Members of the Committee Present: Senators Avard, Pearl, McConkey, Watters and Rosenwald

Members of the Committee Absent : None

Bill Analysis: This bill prohibits smoking in Hampton Beach state park.

Sponsors:

Sen. Altschiller

Rep. Muns

Who supports the bill: Senator Debra Altschiller (SD24), Katie Mclaughlin

Who opposes the bill: Daniel Richardson

Who is neutral on the bill: Meredith Collins (DNCR)

Summary of testimony presented:

Senator Debra Altschiller, District 24

- Senator Altschiller said she filed this bill on behalf of a constituent so everyone can enjoy a safe, smoke-free, visit to Hampton Beach. She listed current guidelines and restrictions for our state parks. She said drone use is prohibited at all state parks. She said pets aren't allowed on the beach from May to September. Horseback riding is only allowed on the beach between October and April.
- She said that alcoholic drinks, glass containers, and playing tackle football are all prohibited. She noted there are guidelines in place so people can enjoy Hampton Park State Beach. She said the intention of this bill is to begin to change culture at the beach. She said cigarette butts are the most littered item found during organized beach cleanups. She said our beaches are not meant to be ashtrays.

- She said this bill imposes no fine or penalty, but it's about education. Culture change initiatives work and she brought up the example of how littering has improved as we have fostered environmental responsibility. She said smoking used to be allowed in workplaces, airplanes and restaurants, but that changed through research and social influence. She said an educational shift in our culture dramatically reduced smoking rates from 42% in 1964 to 15-18% in recent years.
- Senator Altschiller said she contacted the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources over the summer and the fall to discuss this initiative. She wanted to assure the Department that she was not seeking penalties or putting extra work on them, but they refused to meet with her. She hoped that she could have had an in-person meeting. She said the fiscal note acknowledges that any costs for signage can be absorbed by the Department's existing budget.

Senator Avard asked if it would be prohibited to smoke in the parking area or the boardwalk.

Senator Altschiller said the side of the road where the beach is, is the state park so you would not be able to smoke, but the boardwalk is private property. She said most businesses in Hampton do not allow smoking indoors.

Senator Rosenwald asked a hypothetical where if she had a medical marijuana card; would she be allowed to smoke on Hampton beach.

Senator Altschiller said lighting up any substance would not be allowed.

Senator Rosenwald asked Meredith Collins if the Department refused to meet with Senator Altschiller.

Meredith Collins (Department of Natural and Cultural Resources) said she was not aware of that, and that she was not contacted personally.