

Senate Education Finance Committee

Karen Davis 271-7875

SB 507, relative to the financial obligation of a school district concerning students expelled for committing assault against a school staff member.

Hearing Date: January 22, 2026

Time Opened: 11:45 am

Time Closed: Noon

Members of the Committee Present: Senators Murphy, Innis, Ward, Rosenwald and Altschiller

Members of the Committee Absent : Senator Carson

Bill Analysis: This bill limits a school district's financial obligations to the continuing education of an expelled pupil to the average cost-per-pupil where the pupil is expelled as the result of committing an assault against a school staff member.

Sponsors:

Sen. Murphy

Sen. Sullivan

Sen. Avard

Sen. Innis

Sen. Pearl

Who supports the bill: Sen. Howard Pearl, Sen. Daniel Innis

Who opposes the bill: Karen Rosenberg (Disability Rights Center), Emily Lawrence, Fiona Geary, Cindy Kudlik, Chase Eagleson (NH Council on Developmental Disabilities), Jennifer McCarthy, Barrett Christina (NH School Boards Association), Louis Esposito (ABLE-NH), Dawn McKinney (NH Legal Assistance), Kathleen Malsbenden

Who is neutral on the bill: Mark Manganiello, NH Department of Education, Joseph Saulnill

Summary of testimony presented in support:

Sen. Keith Murphy – Prime Sponsor

- This bill was introduced following a serious incident in his district. He also spoke with school boards in other districts and learned that this is a real problem.
- Employees in school districts are being assaulted and threatened. Expulsion of a student committing these assaults is a reasonable step to take.

- However, school districts must pick up the entire cost for expulsion, which in some cases can cost six figures.
- Districts must keep admitting troublesome students into their buildings because they cannot afford the cost of expelling them.
- This bill places a cap on the amount of liability to the average cost per pupil of that district. The remainder of any balance for continuing to educate an expelled student would fall on the parents.
- **Q: Sen. Rosenwald** is concerned that students with intellectual disabilities or autism might be the ones who are most affected by this bill.
- **A: Sen. Murphy** would be happy to work with Sen. Rosenwald on an amendment to exempt students who have been diagnosed with autism or other similar health issues.

Summary of testimony presented in opposition:

Karen Rosenberg, Policy Director, Disability Rights Center

- She appreciated Sen. Rosenwald’s question about how this bill might impact students with disabilities.
- Ms. Rosenberg handed out an excerpt from federal law regarding free and appropriate public education (20 U.S. Code Section 1412 – State eligibility), which includes students who are expelled from school.
- She opposes this bill because a state law cannot contradict federal requirements.
- She is also concerned that putting a cap in this bill could disincentivize schools from determining if a student has a disability.
- “We do not want any students or teachers subjected to assault.”
- However, the state needs to abide by federal law and appropriately identify students whose behavior is the result of their disability.
- **Q: Sen. Murphy** – A teacher, who was pregnant, was assaulted in the hallway of a school. The student who committed this assault was not expelled. What is the scenario under which these two people could be removed from having to interact with each other?
- **A: Ms. Rosenberg** – If that student has a disability and their behavior was the result this disability, the student could be removed to an alternative education environment. But it would cost the school district to educate that student.

Neutral Information Presented:

Joseph Saulnill, Raymond School Board (but does not speak for the Board)

- In his opinion, this bill would not usurp federal laws that require school districts to educate students who have an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or 504 plans.
- One of his concerns is that this bill stipulates “per pupil costs.” If a smaller district has multiple students who are expelled, that district may incur a six-figure cost. That would be an increase for the taxpayers of that town.
- Mr. Saulnill agrees that something needs to be done with students who have assaulted staff members at their school. Expelling a student in NH is not easy; there are several steps a district must go through.
- Sometimes a student who has been expelled has to be educated outside their home and that can be a costly burden to the local taxpayers.
- Overall, he agreed with this bill’s intention but encouraged removing the cost per pupil from it.

Mark Manganiello, Bureau of School Finance, NH Department of Education

- Special education costs are typically about 50% greater than regular education costs.
- This bill putting a cap on cost per pupil might cause “disharmony” with the IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education) law.

KJD

Date Hearing Report completed: January 26, 2026