

Senate Children and Family Law Committee

Declan Donahue 271-3324

HB 1565-FN, relative to the penalty for false reports of suspected abuse and neglect made to the division for children, youth, and families.

Hearing Date: April 3, 2026

Time Opened: 9:50 a.m.

Time Closed: 10:01 a.m.

Members of the Committee Present: Senators Abbas, Sullivan and Long

Members of the Committee Absent : None

Bill Analysis: This bill provides that reports of suspected abuse and neglect may include the name of the person making the report and that a person who makes a false report maliciously or with the intent to cause harm shall be guilty of a misdemeanor. The bill also creates a private right of action for civil damages against a person who makes a false report of suspected abuse or neglect.

Sponsors:

Rep. Spillane

Rep. Cole

Rep. Aures

Rep. McFarlane

Rep. Notter

Rep. Kofalt

Rep. Morton

Rep. Ammon

Rep. Roy

Sen. Murphy

Sen. Sullivan

Who supports the bill: Rep. Debra DiSimone, Rep. Jeanine Notter, Rep. Kim Rice, Denise Costello, Curtis Howland, Eric Pauer, Julie Retelle, Pamela Harders, Jill Mahan, Lisa Rivard, Laura Condon, and Dan Richardson.

Who opposes the bill: Emily Lawrence, Rep. Timothy Horrigan, and 66 others who signed in opposition to the bill online. Contact Declan Donahue (declan.donahue@gc.nh.gov) for the full list of those in opposition.

Summary of testimony presented:

Representative Debra DiSimone (Rockingham - District 18)

- The prime sponsor of the bill could not be there due to illness.
- This bill has passed the House six times, five with bipartisan support.
- This is the same version the Senate amended last year that did not survive the committee of conference due to late added artifacts.
- HB 1656-FN addresses the intentional misuse of the Child Protective Services reporting system through knowingly false reports of abuse.

- New Hampshire law protects good faith reporting, but lacks a meaningful deterrent for adults who knowingly file false reports with the intent to cause harm.
- They trigger intrusive investigations, impose reputational and emotional harm, and place children in the middle of unnecessary and distressing situations.
- Rep. DiSimone provided an example of a child watching March Madness with their father, and a police officer knocks on the door because they were yelling loudly with their father about the game.
- This bill gives tools to law enforcement to vet false reports and allegations.
- This does not apply to people acting in good faith or create liability based on a reasonable belief the child could be in danger.
- Mandatory reporters will remain protected under current law.
- Senator Abbas asked if this is the same draft passed last term.
 - Yes this is the same draft with the same amendment passed last term.
- Senator Long pointed to line 10, and clarified if the reports require people to submit their names.
 - No, they will not, that is not being changed, just giving the option.

Representative Jeanine Notter (Hillsborough - District 12)

- This is an important step in protecting both children and families.
- New Hampshire depends on accurate, good faith reporting to keep kids safe.
- This bill addresses when someone files a false report out of malice, where the consequences are devastating even if it rarely happens.
- Families who home school and follow their faith have had children removed from them due to a false report, inflicting long lasting trauma.
- HB 1565-FN ensures those who misuse the reporting system can be held responsible.

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Date Hearing Report completed: April 3, 2026