

Senate Education Committee

Trevor Currier 271-4151

HB 112-FN, requiring students in the university and community college systems of New Hampshire to pass the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services civics naturalization test, take a course that covers fundamental American documents as part of the general education curriculum, or pass a civics course competency test.

Hearing Date: April 7, 2026

Time Opened: 9:16 a.m.

Time Closed: 9:57 a.m.

Members of the Committee Present: Senators Ward, Sullivan, Prentiss and Altschiller

Members of the Committee Absent : Senator Abbas

Bill Analysis: This bill requires students in the university and community college systems of New Hampshire to pass the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services civics naturalization test, take a course that covers fundamental American documents as part of the general education curriculum, or pass a civics course competency test.

Sponsors:

Rep. Moffett

Rep. Belcher

Rep. Mooney

Rep. Soti

Sen. Pearl

Who supports the bill: 5 People signed in support of HB 112-FN. To see the full list of sign-ins, please email the committee aide (trevor.currier@gc.nh.gov).

Who opposes the bill: 86 People signed in opposition to HB 112-FN. To see the full list of sign-ins, please email the committee aide (trevor.currier@gc.nh.gov).

Who is neutral on the bill: 2 People signed in neutral to HB 112-FN. To see the full list of sign-ins, please email the committee aide (trevor.currier@gc.nh.gov).

Summary of testimony presented in support:

Representative Mike Moffett - Merrimack 4

- Representative Moffett introduced and testified in support of House Bill 112-FN.

- Rep. Moffett stated that a previous law was passed requiring every New Hampshire high school student to pass a naturalization exam to graduate.
- He stated that HB 112-FN requires all New Hampshire public college students to also pass the test in order to graduate. He highlighted that students who already passed the test in high school are exempt.
- He stated that this legislation would boost the value of a New Hampshire college degree.
- She said that many other states have a similar requirement at their public universities, and some private universities do it too.
- He expressed that it is the legislature's responsibility to support knowledge acquisition at public universities.
- He explained that similar legislation in the past has not included a fiscal note and believes the implementation will cost as much as the fiscal note projects. He stated that the fiscal note assumes extra staff at each state school, which would mean hiring someone to manage the test, but he referenced the high school requirement that did not require any additional hires.
- He stated that admission offices and registrars' offices have the capability to document related competencies.
- He stated that House Bill 319 from a previous legislative session was vetoed due to misinformation and because he did not meet with the former governor before the enrollment period for the bill expired.
- He stated that he does not believe the legislation would dissuade out-of-state students from attending a public university in New Hampshire.
- Senator Prentiss inquired how this legislation would assist students with disabilities and those on 504 plans. He explained that the high school graduation requirement bill specifically addresses this issue and can be amended to include 504 plans. He also noted that there are alternatives to taking the exam, such as completing a class that satisfies the requirements.
- Senator Prentiss asked if the 504 concerns do not need to be included in the bill because of the alternative pathways to meet the requirement. He agreed with Senator Prentiss and said he is open to an amendment to address the 504 concerns.
- Senator Altschiller questioned why the sponsor believed the fiscal note was inaccurate and stated that the legislature has consistently asked the college system to do more with less. She shared the logistical challenges related to implementation. He responded that this legislation would not require curriculum development and would involve making the version already accessible to high schools available to colleges. He also mentioned that he does not see the need to hire additional staff.

- Senator Altschiller stated that the state law gives New Hampshire public colleges autonomy in developing their curriculum and requires staff to educate students in preparation for the exam. She also asked where the sponsor saw the requirement existing — in a curriculum or within a department — since it would have to be placed somewhere. He replied that he does not expect a class to be created specifically to teach students about the test material. He noted that the college system is largely autonomous but not entirely so. He stated that it is essential that New Hampshire graduates have a basic understanding of how our form of government operates.
- Senator Sullivan asked if the test is publicly available online for free. He confirmed that the test is free and publicly available online.
- Senator Sullivan asked if this should be regarded as the bare minimum for civics education. He responded that it is a minimal expectation to support other parts of the students' education.

Summary of testimony presented in opposition:

Kathy Provencher – University System New Hampshire

- Ms. Provencher testified in opposition to House Bill 112-FN.
- She expressed her appreciation for the intent of the legislation.
- She stated that the fiscal provided a range between \$100,000 and \$500,000 for the implementation cost. She emphasized that she is unsure whether the cost will reach the full \$500,000, but she assured the committee it would not be zero.
- She emphasized the recent efforts by the university system to cut costs.
- She mentioned that HB 112 imposes an administrative burden on the university system.
- She expressed concern that the bill would be precedent-setting due to the bill establishing graduation requirements.
- She quoted the university system's enabling legislation and emphasized the autonomy granted in the law for the college system.
- She stated that a mechanism will need to be implemented to track compliance. She mentioned that when the high school requirement was passed into law, the Department of Education had to spend \$500,000 on associated technology costs.
- She stated that a rigorous compliance regimen would need to be implemented to ensure staff are trained to follow up with students so as not to delay conferring a prospective graduate's degree.
- She stated that compliance among students and those who are exempt would need to be monitored.

Neutral Information Presented:

Mark Rubinstein and Shannon Reid – *CCSNH*

- Mr. Rubinstein expressed his support for the legislation's intent but also voiced concerns about the implementation factors that will be necessary.
- He stated that he is not concerned with the requirement as an entry point for recent graduates, but rather for students returning to education later in life.
- He stated that he is unsure if additional staff would need to be hired but assured the committee that it would be an extra task delegated to someone.
- He shared recent priorities of the individuals who may be asked to implement the proposed legislation.
- Ms. Reid shared possible amendments for the committee to consider. She shared that the bill could be clarified to ensure it targets degree-seeking students and not those participating in short-term workforce offerings. She stated that her suggestion could be achieved by adding the words “with an associates degree” on line 20.
- She recommended a block exemption for all students who graduated from a New Hampshire high school on January 1, 2026, or later would be beneficial.
- She stated that it would be beneficial if applicants could self-certify on their application to avoid the need to individually track every student.
- She asked whether home school and GED students take the exam.
- She described how the naturalization exam is given in the real world and the work needed to turn the existing questions into a suitable form.
- She stated that after the initial implementation at the high school level, the Department of Education brought an \$800,000 contract to the Governor’s Council so the department could continue administering the test for the next five years.
- She stated that the Department of Education has shared the test given to high school students.
- She stated that the other assessment option is a civics course and is unsure about the feasibility of adding a full course to a student's educational pathway.