

# Senate Election Law and Municipal Affairs Committee

*Jessica Bourque 271-2104*

**HB 1355**, relative to eliminating the default budget from the official ballot referenda.

**Hearing Date:** April 28, 2026

**Time Opened:** 11:09 a.m.

**Time Closed:** 11:18 a.m.

**Members of the Committee Present:** Senators Gray, Lang, Rochefort and Long

**Members of the Committee Absent:** Senator Perkins Kwoka

**Bill Analysis:** This bill eliminates the inclusion of a default budget in an operating budget warrant article for towns that use the official ballot referenda form of meeting. This bill further changes the procedures for what occurs should the operating budget warrant article fail.

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**Sponsors:**

Rep. Noble  
Rep. Berry  
Rep. Layon

Rep. Ammon  
Rep. Drago  
Rep. Tom Mannion

Rep. Aures  
Rep. Labrie  
Rep. Pauer

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**Who supports the bill:** 13 people signed in to support this bill. For a full list of names, please contact committee aide, Jessica Bourque at [jessica.bourque@gc.nh.gov](mailto:jessica.bourque@gc.nh.gov)

**Who opposes the bill:** 181 people signed in opposed to this bill. For a full list of names, please contact committee aide, Jessica Bourque at [jessica.bourque@gc.nh.gov](mailto:jessica.bourque@gc.nh.gov)

**Who is neutral on the bill:** No one

**Summary of testimony presented:**

**Senator Gray introduced the bill on behalf of the prime sponsor.**

**Heather Robitaille, Merrimack**

- Opposes this bill.
- Under this bill, if the operating budget fails to pass, any approved teacher salaries or other increases would not be considered, and districts would need to cut staff, programming, and services.

**Brodie Deshaies, NH Municipal Association**

- This is already permissible under RSA 40:13.

- It will prevent SB 2 towns from fulfilling their contractual commitments.
- Page 1, lines 8-9 would prevent the legislative body in SB 2 towns from amending warrant articles that are required or authorized by law to be printed on the official ballot. This is concerning because many such items are authorized by law and can currently still be amended.
- Page 1, lines 12-13 would conflict with HB 173, which was recommended for Interim Study by this committee.
- Page 4, lines 15-24 contradict HB 1575, which was already passed by the Senate, essentially repealing what the Senate just passed in HB 1575.
- This also repeals 32:16, I and 40:14-b.

**Shawn Jasper, Hudson**

- Representing himself.
- Opposes this bill.
- He recognized that people are frustrated with default budgets, but he doesn't believe this is the solution to the problems.

**Representative Erica Layon, Rockingham-District 13**

- Rep. Layon said that people do not show up for school elections because they have a choice of the budget that is put forward or the default budget that spends more. The built-in increase in spending leaves people feeling disengaged.
- Rep. Layon believes this is a way to slow spending.
- Asked the committee for more time to see if there is a way to sync this bill with the other bill.