

# Senate Election Law and Municipal Affairs Committee

*Jessica Bourque 271-2104*

**HB 613**, relative to enabling local political subdivisions to vote and set a reduced default budget option.

**Hearing Date:** May 13, 2025

**Time Opened:** 10:02 a.m.

**Time Closed:** 10:11 a.m.

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

**Members of the Committee Absent:** Senator Lang

**Bill Analysis:** This bill enables local political subdivisions that have adopted the official ballot referendum form of meeting to adopt provisions for an annual choice for a reduced default budget.

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**Sponsors:**

Rep. Harvey-Bolia

Rep. D. McGuire

Rep. Osborne

Rep. Pauer

Rep. Berry

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**Who supports the bill:** Rep. Harvey-Bolia, Rep. Pauer, Rep. Wherry, Rep. Perez, Aubrey Freedman

**Who opposes the bill:** Barrett Christina, Brodie Deshaies, Brian Hawkins

**Summary of testimony presented:**

**Representative Juliet Harvey-Bolia, Prime Sponsor, Belknap-District 3**

- SB 2 towns would be able to vote on the proposed budget, the default budget, and, under this bill, the reduced default budget.
- The maximum is 10%.
- The purpose of this is to help keep property taxes under control.
- This increases predictability and simplifies the process for voters.

**Barrett Christina, NH School Board Association**

- The NH School Board Association is opposed to this bill.
- This only allows voters to reduce the default budget. NHSBA believes that voters should have a choice.

- Essentially, this establishes a third budget instead of amending the proposed budget. The simple solution would be to adjust the proposed budget, which they are already able to do.

### **Brodie Deshaies, NH Municipal Association**

- NH Municipal Association opposes this bill.
- Concerned that if a legislative body adopts an arbitrary reduced percentage amount, it will be challenging to meet contractual obligations.
- This would prevent local leaders from fulfilling spending approved by previous voters.

### **Aubrey Freedman, Bridgewater**

- Property taxes being too high is one of the biggest complaints in NH. This gives local voters an option.
- Mr. Freedman appreciates that this bill requires voting by ballot, as voice voting can be problematic due to intimidation that some individuals may feel.
- Critical services will not be cut; emergency meetings are still on the table.