

Senate Executive Departments and Administration Committee

Ben Mickens 271-1403

SB 420, relative to the state commission for human rights.

Hearing Date: January 21, 2026

Time Opened: 9:44 a.m.

Time Closed: 9:54 a.m.

Members of the Committee Present: Senators Pearl, McGough, Gannon, Altschiller and Reardon

Members of the Committee Absent : None

Bill Analysis: This bill makes changes to the state commission for human rights.

Sponsors:

Sen. Ward

Who supports the bill: Senator Ruth Ward, Ray Pinard (HRC Chair), Katrina Taylor (HRC Ex. Director)

Who opposes the bill: Marissa Chase (NHAJ)

Who is neutral on the bill: No one.

Summary of testimony presented in support:

Senator Ruth Ward

- I am here to introduce this on behalf of Mr. Raymond Pinard, who took over the Human Rights Commission in 2025. He was selected in part due to his experience turning around organizations.
- I am happy to answer questions, but would defer to Mr. Pinard

Ray Pinard, Chairman, Human Rights Commission + Katrina Taylor, Executive Director, Human Rights Commission

- The packet contains many changes we want to see happening on the commission.
- Currently the Commission Executive Director is appointed by the board rather than the Governor. We would like to change it so the Governor appoints both the Executive Director and Assistant Executive Director. This would bring us in line with other organizations in the state.

- In other places languages should be removed, specifically the advisory committee, which is redundant and time-consuming.
- The advisory committee has not had a substantive meeting since 2025, although it has taken up much of our time.
- We are willing to meet with anyone who has concerns or questions on our work.

Summary of testimony presented in opposition:

Marissa Chase, NH Association for Justice

- We oppose this bill, although I have enjoyed working with Mr. Pinard.
- This bill would directly change language passed last year in the budget and this section was rushed. These changes were seen as necessary at the time to maintain HRC as a functioning body.

Sen. Pearl clarified that Ms. Chase's position is to recommend things stay as they are before making drastic changes.

Ms. Chase agrees and adds to clarify that they are not wedded to the idea that the executive director should have a requirement to be an attorney.

Sen. McGough clarifies that the New Hampshire Association for Justice opposes this bill.

Ms. Chase agrees.

Senator Altschiller clarifies that this bill would strike the requirement for the chair to be an attorney. Do you support this?

Ms. Chase says she does not feel it is necessary for the chair to be an attorney.

Neutral Information Presented: None.