

Senate Education Committee

Trevor Currier 271-4151

SB 579-FN, modifying the language for intra-district public school transfers to include schools within school administrative units.

Hearing Date: January 27, 2026

Time Opened: 9:43 a.m.

Time Closed: 9:58 a.m.

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

Members of the Committee Absent : Senator Abbas

Bill Analysis: This bill extends parents' ability to transfer their children to other schools to include students within school administrative units (SAUs). The bill also authorizes providers of superintendent services to approve or disapprove of school transfers depending on the best interests of the student.

Sponsors:

Sen. Sullivan

Sen. Lang

Sen. Murphy

Sen. Pearl

Sen. Innis

Rep. Noble

Rep. Freeman

Rep. Rice

Rep. Notter

Rep. Popovici-Muller

Who supports the bill: 4 People signed in support of SB 579-FN. To see the full list of sign-ins, please email the committee aide (trevor.currier@gc.nh.gov)

Who opposes the bill: 71 People signed in opposition of SB 579-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: No one signed in neutrality of SB 579-FN.

Summary of testimony presented in support:

Senator Victoria Sullivan

- Senator Sullivan introduced and testified in support of Senate Bill 579-FN.
- Sen. Sullivan clarified that she filed this bill as a correction to a bill passed last year, which authorized intra-district school choice. She explained that this bill

amends the previously enacted bill to include SAUs within the intra-district school choice framework.

- Senator Altschiller said she recalls the Senate passing the intra-district school choice bill but does not remember this provision being included. Senator Sullivan explained that, at the time, the understanding was that SAUs would be included, but when the Education Rules were finalized, they were not included.
- Senator Altschiller mentioned that school boards in her district are concerned about the costs of including open enrollment within SAUs. She gave an example of a larger school with enough resources to offer a specialized autism program and asked Sen. Sullivan if they would be required to admit a student from a smaller school that lacks the necessary resources for the specialized program. Senator Sullivan responded that adding students does not dilute the program, and since the bill includes a capacity limit, students from the home district would not be excluded from participating.
- Senator Altschiller asked Senator Sullivan who would pay for the students participating in the open enrollment program. Senator Sullivan responded that if open enrollment passes, it will be managed across the state, but this bill specifies that an agreement must be structured between the districts, which is similar to existing practices.
- Senator Prentiss asked whether the sending district is paying for a student to attend a school outside their district within the SAU. Senator Sullivan said she spoke with the Commissioner of Education and mentioned that districts would work together to set a fair tuition rate for the district, similar to how they coordinate to split the administrative costs of the SAU.

Summary of testimony presented in opposition:

Barrett Christina (NHSBA)

- Mr. Christina testified in opposition to SB 579-FN.
- He stated that intra-district transfers differ notably from transfers across the SAU because tuition must be paid, leading to a cost for the resident district that school boards may not have anticipated when setting their budgets.
- He stated that the current law permits a student to transfer to another district under the best interest provision or the manifest educational hardship provision.
- He said that the open enrollment part of this bill causes several budgeting difficulties. Specifically, he pointed out that school districts will have already finalized their budgets in March, even though the bill allows students to apply until July. This could lead to unexpected additional costs for the district.

- He also expressed concern about inequity in access. He stated that for students to attend a school far away, they would need adequate resources for logistics, such as transportation to and from school, and students without these privileges would not be able to participate in open enrollment.
- He observed that capacity is not specified in the bill and would require school districts to assess it themselves. He mentioned that capacity could pertain to various aspects, including fiscal capacity, transportation capacity, staffing capacity, or physical space.
- He stated that the question Senator Altschiller raised about how the tuition for participating students is paid is addressed under RSA 193:3.

Neutral Information Presented: None