

Senate Education Committee

Trevor Currier 271-4151

SB 580-FN, establishing a school cooperative purchasing program.

Hearing Date: January 27, 2026

Time Opened: 9:59 a.m.

Time Closed: 10:12 a.m.

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

Members of the Committee Absent : Senators Altschiller and Abbas

Bill Analysis: This bill establishes a school cooperative purchasing program to allow multiple school districts or school administrative units (SAUs) the ability to enter into joint agreements for the procurement of specific goods and services in schools. The bill also authorizes the state board of education to place schools and SAUs into a receivership in limited circumstances.

Sponsors:

Sen. Sullivan

Sen. McGough

Sen. Pearl

Rep. Layon

Who supports the bill: 6 People signed in support of SB 580-FN. To see the full list of sign-ins, please email the committee aide (trevor.currier@gc.nh.gov)

Who opposes the bill: 72 People signed in opposition of SB 580-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: 1 Person signed in neutrality of SB 580-FN.

Summary of testimony presented in support:

Senator Victoria Sullivan, *Senate District 18*

- Senator Sullivan introduced and testified in support of Senate Bill 580-FN.
- Sen. Sullivan stated that the bill accomplishes three primary objectives: it authorizes a procurement process among school districts, establishes clear duties for school boards, and creates a framework for placing struggling districts into receivership.

- Sen. Sullivan explained that the bill's procurement process is designed to give smaller school districts the same purchasing power as larger districts, thereby strengthening their bargaining position.
- Senator Prentiss asked Senator Sullivan whether the bill leverages the state's buying power, and Senator Sullivan agreed with her description.
- Senator Prentiss asked whether the bill would require the creation of an additional position. Senator Sullivan responded that no new positions are mandated under the bill and noted that participation is optional for districts.
- Senator Prentiss clarified that the state would act as the agent of the agreement, not the districts establishing agreements with each other. Senator Sullivan replied that yes, the state will handle the procurement.
- Senator Ward noted that every school belongs to a district and every district belongs to an SAU, and that the original purpose of SAUs was to increase districts' purchasing power. She asked what had happened to that original function. Senator Sullivan responded that this bill builds on that foundation by further strengthening purchasing power through the state's leverage.
- Sen. Sullivan stated that the school board guidelines established in SB 580 were developed in collaboration with the Department of Education.
- Sen. Sullivan explained that the receivership provision serves as an accountability measure, allowing the State Board of Education to intervene and provide support to schools in need of additional assistance.

Summary of testimony presented in opposition:

Brian Hawkins, *NEANH*

- Mr. Hawkins, on behalf of NEANH, testified in opposition to SB 580-FN.
- He expressed concern that in section three of the bill the additional rulemaking authority grants the state board of education much broader authority in areas like educator employment and implementation of educational programs.
- He expressed additional concerns with Section Four of the bill, noting that it lacks clear detail regarding the authority of the individual appointed to oversee a school. He also stated that the criteria for placing schools into receivership are insufficiently defined and lack clear standards.
- Senator Sullivan clarified that Section Three of the bill refers to local school boards, not the State Board of Education. Mr. Hawkins added that the referenced RSA pertains to the State Board's rulemaking authority regarding the duties of school boards.

Neutral Information Presented:

Barrett Christina, NHSBA

- Mr. Christina stated the cooperative purchasing aspects of the bill could lead to districts saving money.
- He stated that the section outlining school board responsibilities is already addressed in current law but agreed with Mr. Hawkins that the provision pertains to the State Board of Education. He also stated that if some of the responsibilities listed are not in the Education rules, they are certainly considered best practices.