Senate Commerce Committee

Aaron Jones 271-2609

SB 562, relative to a home damage mitigation and resiliency program.

Hearing Date: February 3, 2026

Time Opened: 9:45 a.m. **Time Closed**: 10:07 a.m.

Members of the Committee Present: Senators Innis, Murphy, McGough, Fenton and Reardon

Members of the Committee Absent : Senator Ricciardi

Bill Analysis: This bill establishes the Granite State home mitigation and resiliency program to provide financial grants to homeowners to mitigate residential real property against loss from severe weather events. The bill also establishes a fund to provide support for this program.

Sponsors:

Sen. Abbas	Sen. Lang	Sen. Watters
Sen. Avard	Sen. Gannon	Sen. Rosenwald
Rep. Packard		

Who supports the bill: 65 individuals were in support. Full sign in sheets are available upon request by contacting the Legislative Aide, Aaron Jones (aaron.jones@gc.nh.gov).

Who opposes the bill: 1 individual was in opposition. Full sign in sheets are available upon request by contacting the Legislative Aide, Aaron Jones (aaron.jones@gc.nh.gov).

Who is neutral on the bill: No one

Summary of testimony presented in support:

Nicole O'Brien, on behalf of Senator Daryl Abbas

- At the request of the Insurance Department, this bill would establish the Granite State Home Mitigation Resiliency Program, which would provide financial grants to homeowners to mitigate real property loss from severe weather events.
- Grants up to $9,500 would be provided to residents for projects to enhance the resiliency of their homes for severe weather.

- This bill would help to improve insurability, reduce the severity and frequency of insurance claims, and ultimately lower insurance premiums for all state residents.

DJ Bettencourt, Commissioner, and James Fox, Director of the Property and Casualty Division, New Hampshire Insurance Department

- This bill sought to enhance the affordability of homeowners coverage.
- Residents are struggling with increased insurance premiums, including homeowners coverage. When coverage is unreachable, Commissioner Bettencourt said it creates a barrier to homeownership.
- When an individual purchases a home, banks require homeowners insurance.
- Non-renewals and rejections force consumers into more expensive markets, such as the surplus lines market.
- Presently, a hard market exists where demand for a particular kind of coverage is at traditional levels or higher and access is more constrained. As a result, coverage becomes more expensive.
- The homeowners insurance market has begun managing their risk more conservatively and they have tightened their underwriting due to inflation, economic pressures, interest rates, and an increased number and severity of catastrophic weather events. This bill aimed to mitigate some of this pressure and strain.
- This bill was modeled after what has been tested and proven effective in other states.
- This bill would establish a grant fund, its criteria, and eligible projects.
- If an individual has an issue with their roof, for example, they could receive a grant to address the deficiencies to make their home more resilient.
- Uniquely, this bill would extend to issues on the property itself. Commissioner Bettencourt told a personal story of his parents who had a maple tree on their property that began to die. They encountered difficulties when renewing their insurance because the underwriters said the tree was a new risk on their property. It cost $10,000 for the tree to be cut down.
- A similar program exists in 8 states. There are 5 states that have similar proposals pending in their Legislatures.
    - Since the program began in Alabama, they have fortified over 60,000 homes and over 8,000 grants were issued in 2025.
    - Louisiana and North Carolina have seen a reduction in premiums as well as insurance discounts for proactive homeowners.
    - In Oklahoma, Commissioner Bettencourt said their disaster initiatives have led to “fewer claims and a culture of preparedness.”
- Commissioner Bettencourt said the New Hampshire Home Builders Association was supportive of this program.

- Commissioner Bettencourt said they were hoping to see lower insurance premiums, and safer and more resilient homes that can be protected against extreme weather events like microbursts, floods, and the occasional hurricane.
- Given the existing budget constraints, this program was designed to have no allocation. The National Association of Insurance Commissioners has begun conversations on how to help states fund these programs. At the state level, Commissioner Bettencourt said they have had conversations with large philanthropic organizations and environmental non-profits. States in New England have also discussed approaching the Federal Home Reserve Bank for investments.
- Commissioner Bettencourt reiterated that an appropriation or dedicated revenue source was not feasible or practical at this time. He wanted to establish the program, so when money does become available, they can be ready.
- **Senator Reardon** asked if an individual had to be denied insurance to take advantage of the program.
    - **Commissioner Bettencourt** said no, but he hoped individuals would take steps before they found themselves in that situation. In non-renewal or denial situations where there is back and forth, it is likely too late to take substantive steps to correct an issue to avoid a lapse in existing coverage. This aimed to be a proactive preventative.
- **Senator Reardon** asked if there had to be a contract with a home insurer.
    - **Commissioner Bettencourt** said this bill did not mandate discounts because they are already happening.
    - **Mr. Fox** replied that some carriers have a discount that is standalone. In terms of fortifying a home and making it safer, it is already included in how much an individual will be paying for insurance. He said this helped consumers in two ways.
- **Senator Reardon** asked if there would be lower premiums for all homeowners or a select group.
    - **Commissioner Bettencourt** said both, but it would most directly impact individual homeowners who have taken steps to do something to their home or property, which is favorable to them during the underwriting process. Lowering premiums is the goal, and it can be done in two ways. It can be done when an individual comes to underwrite a renewal. If a home or property is facing challenges, this program would give an individual an opportunity to do just enough to get a quote for renewal instead of being pushed out to the surplus lines market, which is significantly more expensive.
- **Senator Reardon** said on Page 1, Line 26, it says manufactured housing on a foundation, but most are on slabs.
    - **Commissioner Bettencourt** said they would look at that.
- **Senator McGough** asked how big they thought the fund could get and when it could be accessed.

  - **Commissioner Bettencourt** said when they were thinking of concepts and trying to find dedicated revenue sources at the state level, they used a $3 to $5 million budget model. Any single grant would be capped at $10,000, and individuals would only be eligible once every five years. The program would be targeted to those who are most in need of assistance. It would depend on any given year as to the size of the grant. If someone needed a full roof replacement, they would likely need the full $10,000 and they would need to contribute to some of the repairs themselves. The Department hoped to help 100 individuals each year, and as time goes on, grow it to assist more individuals.
- **Senator Fenton** said authority would be delegated to the commissioner to define eligibility documentation and what threatens insurability. They also are in control of the contractor, evaluator, and credentials. He was worried they were exempt from RSA 91-A.
  - **Commissioner Bettencourt** said while the position of commissioner was cited specifically, the Department as a whole was reviewing and making these decisions. Over the years, they have earned a reputation as true subject matter experts.
  - **Mr. Fox** said most of this bill would not be subject to RSA 91-A requests because it is confidential information. Grant applications and documents related to projects that are on an individual level are not open to RSA 91-A. There is transparency built in, such as grant amounts and where it came from.
- **Senator Fenton** asked if liability would fall on homeowners, contractors, and evaluators.
  - **Commissioner Bettencourt** said yes.

Summary of testimony presented in opposition: None

Neutral Information Presented: None

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Date Hearing Report completed: February 6, 2026