

Senate Executive Departments and Administration Committee

Kevin Condict 271-7875

SB 179-FN, to administratively attach the state council on housing stability to the department of health and human services.

Hearing Date: February 5, 2025

Time Opened: 9:15 a.m.

Time Closed: 9:31 a.m.

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

Members of the Committee Absent : None

Bill Analysis: This bill provides that the state council on housing stability shall be administratively attached to the department of health and human services.

Sponsors:

Sen. Gray

Who supports the bill: Senator James Gray (SD 6), Katy Easterly Martey (CDFA), Jack Ruderman (NH Housing), Dawn McKinney (NH Legal Assistance), and Daniel Richardson.

Who opposes the bill: None.

Who is neutral on the bill: Jenny O'Higgins (DHHS).

Summary of testimony presented:

Senator James Gray, Senate District 6

- Sen. Gray introduced SB 179-FN, which would administratively attach the state Council on Housing Stability to the Department of Health and Human Services.
- He noted the original request was for a dedicated person to be on the council.
- DHHS would provide support for this council, however that is not exactly what the person who requested the bill really wanted.
- He noted, if the Council on Housing Stability really wants an extra person, they need to convince one of the departments to put that request in one of their budgets.

Katie Easterly Martey
New Hampshire Community Development Finance Authority

- Ms. Easterly Martey noted she is the executive director of the Community Development Finance Authority (CDFA). They work closely with the state to advance important community and economic development initiatives.
- She noted that a responsibility she is tasked with is to serve as the co-lead of the Council on Housing Stability.
- She said it would be important over time to have committed staff for this Council, however she also realized how significantly constrained the budget is this year.
- She agreed with the approach Sen. Gray took with this bill. Instead of an extra position, the Council will be administratively attached to DHHS.
- She said the Council has three co-leads, Business and Economic Affairs, DHHS and CDFFA. However, she asked that New Hampshire Housing be added as a co-lead to the Council.
- She asked the Committee to consider adding another representative to the Council. She would like to see either another private developer on the Council or a landlord.
- Sen. Altschiller stated that on the Council there is currently a vacancy for a private landlord. She asked if they would like to get that spot filled or add another spot.
 - o Ms. Easterly Martey said she would like two representatives of landlords appointed by the Governor.
- Sen. Altschiller asked if it would be helpful if the Committee amended the bill to have two developers and have them geographically designated as urban and rural.
 - o Ms. Easterly Martey said she would leave that to the Committee's discretion, but she worried if they limited it geographically, they may be excluding thoughtful and engaged individuals. She would like it to be left open without geographic distinction.

Jack Ruderman, NH Housing

- Mr. Ruderman noted he is the legislative affairs advisor with NH Housing and said they supported the bill.
- He noted there are two potential amendments for the Committee's consideration.
- He said the first amendment has to do with annual reports. The Council on Housing Stability offers an annual report and every three years they offer a strategic plan. However, RSA 204-C:47 requires NH Housing to submit a state

housing plan to address the housing needs of people of low and middle income. He said the Council on Housing Stability issues a report that is more comprehensive, and they feel as though having both these reports are redundant. He said the Committee may want to repeal the RSA requiring NH Housing to submit a biennial housing plan.

- He said the second change concerns the Housing and Community Development Planning Council (HCDPC). He noted this entity was created by an executive order in 1997 to bring together state agencies that work in affordable housing and community development.
- He thought it might make sense to attach the HCDPC to the Council on Housing Stability. HCDPC would continue to do their work but report to the Council on Housing Stability.
- HCDPC would now be in statute rather than just executive order and administratively it would be efficient to attach it to the Council.
- Sen. Reardon asked where she could find the biennial report for NH Housing.
 - o Mr. Ruderman said it is on the NH Housing website under publications.
- Sen. Pearl asked if he had suggested language that he would like the Committee to consider.
 - o Mr. Ruderman said he doesn't have it yet, but he can put it together and send it to the Committee.

Jenny O'Higgins, DHHS Behavioral Health

- Ms. O'Higgins noted she is the Legislative Liaison for Behavioral Health at DHHS.
- She said, as the Committee has heard, DHHS works closely with the Council and helps to provide strategic leadership and address housing and homelessness together.
- She said the fiscal note was not yet attached to the bill. She said the Department on the underlying bill was requesting a part-time administrative position so for FY26 it would be estimated at \$11,700. This would allow the Department to provide additional support to the Council and they feel it would help advance the goals of the Council.