

Senate Election Law and Municipal Affairs Committee

Jessica Bourque 271-2104

HB 1807-FN, relative to mandatory reports to voters.

Hearing Date: March 31, 2026

Time Opened: 9:50 a.m.

Time Closed: 10:05 a.m.

Members of the Committee Present: Senators Gray, Lang, Rochefort, Perkins Kwoka and Long

Members of the Committee Absent: None

Bill Analysis: This bill makes changes to the form and content of the mandatory report to voters distributed before any meeting at which any school district adopts a school budget.

Sponsors:

Rep. Peternel
Rep. Pauer
Rep. DeVito
Sen. Lang

Rep. Bernardy
Rep. Drago
Sen. Murphy
Sen. Sullivan

Rep. Berry
Rep. Colcombe
Sen. Avar

Who supports the bill: 7 people signed in to support the bill. For a full list of names, please contact Jessica Bourque at jessica.bourque@gc.nh.gov

Who opposes the bill: 63 people signed in opposed to the bill. For a full list of names, please contact Jessica Bourque at jessica.bourque@gc.nh.gov

Summary of testimony presented:

Representative Katy Peternel, Carroll - District 6

- The original idea was to list the tax impact on a local school district, but it has morphed into something different.
- Continuation of increasing transparency for taxpayers.
- This came from the “Students First Act” of 2023 and HB 557 (2025).
- In the House, it was felt that the definition of “cost per pupil” needed to be amended, so they came up with a different definition, but the Department of Education said they would prefer if the definition in the current statute were left alone.
- This would now change the number of graphs on school district websites from three to one.

- They heard from school districts that publishing in local newspapers is expensive, and so is printing on larger paper. As a result, they changed from “shall” to “may” regarding printing in local newspapers and also reduced the paper size.
- One concern she has that is not addressed in the bill is that her school district chose to post information only inside the schools, so only the people who entered and exited the schools saw that information.
- It can be hard to find information on a school website because they often hide it and make it hard to locate.
- Highlight Section 2, line 10, one district did not list online; they only listed on the ballot, and they want to be sure people can see the information before the deliberative session.

Senator Lang asked about the idea of adjusting for inflation and if it accurately reflects the actual cost. For example, if the average cost of a teacher is \$48,000, but it is adjusted for inflation, and that number is displayed, that number isn’t actually what the school is paying for a teacher.

Rep. Peternel said that might need to be addressed; the idea came up in the committee. The idea was to show the adjustment in inflation in the past.

Senator Lang said that doesn’t show the voter what they are actually paying.

Rep. Peternel said she understands Senator Lang’s point and asked the committee to amend it however they feel they need to.

Senator Lang said that in his district, they list the average teacher salary, but they list all administrators' salaries as a single group number, and no one knows how many administrators are included in that number. Senator Lang asked if they should list both groups the same way?

Rep. Peternel said she agreed, which is why she wanted all this information on one graph. It needs to be as simple as possible for voters.

Representative Riche Colcombe, Hillsborough-District 30

- Regarding the charts, she was finding that the data is not applied apples to apples.
- One district published the actual cost alongside the inflation rate so someone could see the trend. Which she believes is a good idea.
- Concerned that in SB 2 districts, because the law now states they don’t have to include it on the warrant, only on the ballot, they are not listing it on the warrant during the deliberative session. So that loophole may need to be closed.
- Need to find a place where information is publicly available.

Senator Perkins Kwoka said there are a couple of other bills the committee is working on that involve public posting, and asked whether posting online, as well as at two other locations in town, might solve the posting issue.

Rep. Colcombe said she would agree with that.

Senator Perkins Kwoka said that this seems like good information to have, but she is concerned about the logistics on line 9 regarding the timing between the adoption of school budgets and the adoption of town budgets.

Rep. Colcombe said she can't remember exactly what was discussed in the House about that, but the first budget hearing is not necessarily the public hearing. She apologized for not having an answer to that.

Aubrey Freedman, Bridgewater

- Supports this bill.
- It is good that the public gets information.
- Suggested a few changes:
 - Moving up the time before the budget hearing would be good.
 - One graph is easier for the public, and it would eliminate the opportunity for manipulation of data.
 - Another change he recommends and explains is that he is in a new SAU, and since there weren't 10 years of previous data, the district used that and didn't provide the information. So instead of saying "all available years," consider something like "if the district has fewer than 10 years of historical data for the required graphs in paragraphs III and IV, the upcoming budget year to be voted on counts towards the calculation of 'previous 10 years'"