

Senate Education Committee

Trevor Currier 271-4151

HB 1374, relative to the procedures for withdrawal from a cooperative school district.

Hearing Date: April 21, 2026

Time Opened: 9:56 a.m.

Time Closed: 10:17 a.m.

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

Members of the Committee Absent : Senator Prentiss

Bill Analysis: This bill modifies the procedure for withdrawal from a cooperative school district to allow a majority of voters in a single withdrawing district to elect to withdraw. The bill also clarifies that a supermajority of voters in the withdrawing district voting in favor of withdrawal shall constitute conclusive evidence of the withdrawal of the district.

Sponsors:

Rep. Mary Murphy

Rep. Colcombe

Rep. Ford

Rep. Peeples

Rep. D. McGuire

Rep. Porcelli

Rep. P. Brown

Sen. Ward

Who supports the bill: 17 People signed in support of HB 1374. To see the full list of sign-ins, please email the committee aide (trevor.currier@gc.nh.gov).

Who opposes the bill: 95 People signed in opposition to HB 1374. 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.

Summary of testimony presented in support:

Representative Mary Murphy – Hillsborough 27

- Representative Murphy introduced and testified in support of House Bill 1374.
- She stated that smaller towns are routinely outnumbered and outvoted on matters that come before her school district.
- She referenced an issue in Frankestown where the town discovered they were overpaying by a million dollars and that their educators' salaries had been decreasing while the rest of the Conval districts' salaries were increasing.
- She highlighted the bipartisan support for the measure in Frankestown.

- She established that the bill is important because it affects 51% of the municipalities in the state.
- She highlighted the three requirements necessary for withdrawal from a cooperative school district. The first is to secure the approval of a majority of the withdrawing towns voters. Secondly, securing state board of education approval for the feasibility and suitability of the withdrawal. Third, securing the approval of the majority of the other cooperative town voters.
- She established that HB 1374 sought to remove the third requirement, other towns' permission.
- She stated that the second requirement, retaining feasibility, is maintained in the legislation because it ensures that the students' best interests remain the primary focus.
- She highlighted that the bill required a 3/5 majority of the withdrawing town to ensure sufficient support from the town's people.
- She again highlighted that 81% of Frankestown voters approved withdrawal, and the state board approved the feasibility study. However, the withdrawal was thwarted by the votes of the other member towns.
- She also highlighted Mason's withdrawal, which took six years and multiple attempts.
- She compared the situation to that of a divorce.
- Senator Abbas asked what the voter turnout was in her town's withdrawal election. She could not confirm the exact number but stated it was higher than a regular municipal election.
- Senator Altschiller stated that the withdrawal should also consider the significant investments in capital campaigns and asked where in the legislation it details the withdrawing towns' responsibility to continue paying their share of the capital expenditures. Representative Murphy stated that RSA 195:31 defines how liabilities and assets should be handled for the withdrawing town. She continued that the withdrawing towns must be willing to forfeit the equity of the other buildings in the district.

Aubrey Freedman

- Mr. Freedman testified in support of the legislation and agreed with the sponsors' use of a divorce as an analogy.
- He stated that SAU 108 broke away from SAU 4 and did not see the issues that individuals anticipated when the decision was being made.
- He stated that the students are not worse off because of the decision.
- He stated that it increases local control for the municipalities and parents in the education of their students.

Catherine Peschke

- Ms. Peschke reflected on her experience in Croydon when they separated from Newport.
- She stated that schools exist to serve students and parents, not school employees.

Summary of testimony presented in opposition:

Barrett Christina – *NH School Boards Association*

- Mr. Christina highlighted that existing law reflected a bipartisan compromise in 2023.
- He expressed concern that the legislation could create additional administrative work because once towns withdraw, there would be more budget cycles and more meetings, assuming the withdrawing town remains in the same school administrative unit.
- He partially agreed with the marriage analogy but added that it comes with a prenuptial agreement that all member towns agreed to at one point. He stated that if it takes all municipalities to create the agreement, it should require all of them to dissolve the cooperative school district.
- He shared that one or two towns have successfully withdrawn from a cooperative school district under the current law.
- Senator Abbas asked what changes were made in 2023. Mr. Christina stated that the changes made in 2023 were paragraphs 1, 2, 3, and 4. This required a majority vote of all of the member towns.
- Senator Altschiller reiterated that all member towns of the cooperative school district had to vote in the affirmative, and if a single town did not vote for the district, the process must begin again to consider a cooperative school district with fewer towns than initially proposed. He agreed with Senator Altschiller's description.
- Senator Altschiller stated that this legislation would require only the withdrawing town to agree to withdraw. He also stated that each member of the school board of a cooperative school district has an equal vote. Mr. Barrett stated that each town is represented on the school board, but representation is largely proportional.

Neutral Information Presented: None.

TC
Date Hearing Report completed: April 21, 2026