

# Senate Executive Departments and Administration Committee

*Kevin Condict 271-7875*

**HB 156**, relative to the duties of the advisory committee on state procurement.

**Hearing Date:** April 9, 2025

**Time Opened:** 9:50 a.m.

**Time Closed:** 10:17 a.m.

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

**Members of the Committee Absent :** Senator Gannon

**Bill Analysis:** This bill amends the membership and duties of the committee to review state procurement policies to include making recommendations to encourage local food production and conservation.

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**Sponsors:**

Rep. Bixby

Rep. Caplan

Rep. N. Germana

Rep. M. Murray

Rep. Potenza

Rep. Simpson

Sen. Innis

Sen. Watters

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**Who supports the bill:** Rep. Carol McGuire (Merr. 27), Rep. Peter Bixby (Straff. 13), Nikki Kolb (NDRA-NH), Janet Lucas, Patricia Beffa-Negrini, Shea Flanagan, Melissa Marry, James Hiltz, Amy Agostino, Sarahlynn Williams, Hannah Smith, Sarah McCarthy, and Benjamin Stinson.

**Who opposes the bill:** Julie Smith, and Daniel Richardson.

**Who is neutral on the bill:** John Williams (DHHS).

**Summary of testimony presented:**

**Representative Peter Bixby, Strafford 13**

- Rep. Bixby introduced House Bill 156.
- Rep. Bixby explained that the House amended the original bill, but he has heard from John Williams at the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) that there is a problem with that amendment.
- Rep. Bixby stated that DHHS approves of the underlying bill, and he will be speaking to that version.

- Rep. Bixby stated that this bill addresses the status of farms in New Hampshire.
- Rep. Bixby said there are about four thousand farms in New Hampshire and about twenty-four hundred of those have gross incomes of \$10,000 or less.
- Rep. Bixby stated that another eight hundred farms have gross incomes of \$50,000 or less and maybe one hundred farms have gross incomes of over a million dollars.
- Rep. Bixby stated that New Hampshire is either first or second in the country for direct customer sales.
- Rep. Bixby explained that means that most farmers' income depends on what they can sell at farmers markets or community markets.
- Rep. Bixby stated that the purpose of this bill is to increase the options for who our farmers can sell to.
- Rep. Bixby explained that a possible option is state procurement, but current rules make that difficult, which is why he put this forward as a study committee.
- Rep. Bixby stated that if farmers can use state procurement and the state is getting locally sourced food, everyone benefits.
- Senator Pearl asked about having a member of the Senate on the committee.
  - o Rep. Bixby stated that he did not intend to leave a member of the Senate off the committee membership.

**Representative Carol McGuire, Merrimack 27**

- Rep. McGuire stated that this legislation has two useful things for a study committee. It requires knowledge that was not localized in one of the standing committees and it could reasonably be studied in one term.
- Rep. McGuire explained that there is a dormant Advisory Committee on State Procurement which can be utilized for this study and then repealed.
- Senator Reardon asked if they checked with the Commissioner of Administrative Services to see if there is any need for the Advisory Committee on State Procurement.
  - o Rep. McGuire replied that there is someone from the Department that will speak to the Committee on that.

**Nikki Kolb, Organic Farming Association of New Hampshire**

- Ms. Kolb read testimony on behalf of their Board President, Julie Davidson.

- Ms. Davidson strongly supports establishing a committee to review state procurement policies for local, organic and sustainable farms.
- Ms. Davidson saw this study as crucial for New Hampshire's agricultural future.
- Ms. Davidson believed this would advance key goals from New Hampshire's Food and Agriculture Strategic Plan by supporting farm viability through expanded market access.
- Ms. Davidson believed there are numerous benefits to increasing procurement from local farms.
- Ms. Davidson listed some of those benefits as increased demand for local produce, economic growth, job creation and tax revenue.

**John Williams, Department of Health and Human Services**

- Mr. Williams stated that this bill was amended during the executive session, so he did not see the change of repealing and sunseting the State Committee on Procurement.
- Mr. Williams stated that last session there was a cleanup bill repealing dormant committees and the committee that was of interest to the Department was the State Procurement Committee.
- Mr. Williams explained that the Department worked with Senator Carson to stand up the state procurement model because many state agencies deal with procurement and there was a lot of great work done by the Advisory Committee on State Procurement in the years before the pandemic.
- Mr. Williams explained that it is true they have not met in a few years but when they do meet it is critically important for many state agencies dealing with issues around procurement.
- Mr. Williams stated that he would like to speak with Senator Carson to be sure she still believes this committee is needed as emphatically as she did last year when HB 1030 was being discussed.
- Mr. Williams explained that the Department is in support of the underlying bill.
- Senator Pearl asked if he would advise leaving the State Procurement Committee in place and adding this to something other than the Procurement Committee.
  - o Mr. Williams replied yes, the cleanest approach would be to go back to the bill as introduced.

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Date Hearing Report completed: April 14, 2025