

Senate Education Committee

Ryan Meleedy 271-4151

HB 235, relative to amending the educator code of ethics and code of conduct to include responsibility to parents.

Hearing Date: April 15, 2025

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

Members of the Committee Absent : None

Bill Analysis: This bill amends the educator code of conduct to include responsibility to parents.

Sponsors:

Rep. Ladd
Rep. Osborne
Rep. Noble
Sen. Ward

Rep. Kofalt
Rep. S. Smith
Rep. Drye
Sen. Lang

Rep. Cordelli
Rep. Peternel
Rep. Lynn

Who supports the bill: 9 People signed in support of House Bill 235. To access the full list, please contact the committee aide (ryan.meleedy@gc.nh.gov).

Who opposes the bill: 307 People signed in opposition to House Bill 235. To access the full list, please contact the committee aide (ryan.meleedy@gc.nh.gov).

Who is neutral on the bill: No one signed in neutrality to this bill.

Summary of testimony presented in support:

Representative Glenn Cordelli - On Behalf of Representative Rick Ladd.

- Representative Cordelli stated that House Bill 235 would amend the existing code of conduct for educators to extend their responsibilities from just students to students and parents.
- Representative Cordelli explained that he has heard a lot of testimony about the need to improve education in New Hampshire. Improving the partnership between schools and parents to benefit students will go a long way toward addressing this.

- Representative Cordelli stated that including parents in addressing issues like homework, discipline, and culture will make it a joint effort and increase parental involvement in education.
- Senator Altschiller asked who would be the arbiter of determining whether parents are adhering to the code of conduct. Representative Cordelli responded that this is the code of conduct for educators, and it indicates that educators have a responsibility to the students and parents.
- Senator Altschiller asked what recourse could be pursued when parents breach the code of conduct. Representative Cordelli responded that he is unsure how a parent could breach an educator's code of conduct.
- Senator Altschiller asked what specifically in the code of conduct this bill applies to parents. Representative Cordelli replied that there is a code of conduct and ethics for educators, not for parents, and this bill does not create one.
- Senator Prentiss asked if Representative Cordelli was attempting to develop a parental code of conduct. Representative Cordelli expressed that parental involvement in education is not a new concept. He established the existing code of conduct for educators, which outlines various other educator responsibilities to other education stakeholders, including other education professionals, students, and the school community. He said this bill is necessary because educators should also be responsible to parents as they are to other stakeholders.
- Senator Prentiss asked if we are creating a code of conduct for parents or drawing a line in their responsibility. Representative Cordelli reiterated that this bill does not develop a code of conduct for parents. He expressed that this bill indicates the responsibility for the involvement and respect of parents by educators.
- Senator Sullivan clarified that there is a line in the educator code of conduct that expresses that educators have a responsibility to the students. She asked if she understood the bill correctly, in that it adds that teachers also have a responsibility to parents. Representative Cordelli confirmed that Senator Sullivan's understanding was correct.
- Senator Sullivan asked if the student handbook, which parents sign annually, acts as their code of conduct with the schools. Representative Cordelli confirmed that this is correct.
- Senator Prentiss inquired about what would happen if a parent violates the code of conduct. Representative Cordelli repeated that this is an educator's code of conduct, not a parent's code of conduct. The student handbook that receives a parent's signature is satisfactory and familiarizes the parents with their students' school district policies.

Summary of testimony presented in opposition:

Representative Peggy Balboni

- Representative Balboni testified in opposition to House Bill 235.
- She established that the New Hampshire Educator Code of Conduct is meant to provide a set of guiding principles of the shared responsibilities for those in the education profession. She also mentioned that the New Hampshire Department of Education enforces the code of conduct and delivers sanctions to educators who violate it.
- She established that the code of conduct is structured around four responsibilities: responsibilities to the other education professionals, students, the school community, and ethical use of technology. She posited that House Bill 235 would include parents to what is considered the school community in the handbook. She expressed that adding parents is redundant and unnecessary because parents are already recognized as vital school community members.
- She expressed concern that the New Hampshire Department of Education would have the authority to place additional obligations on teachers.
- Representative Balboni explained that school administrators are responsible for parents. Parents are not teachers' responsibility because teachers are subject to the directives handed down from administrators.
- She stated that students, teachers, and parents must work together to deliver the best possible outcome for the student. She expressed concern that this bill disrupts this relationship by creating needless tension between teachers and parents.
- Senator Altschiller said that if a teacher violates the code of conduct, there are possible implications for their licensure. She asked if this bill were to pass and create additional responsibilities for educators, who would get to determine what the responsibilities to the parents entail. Representative Balboni said it would need to go to the Department of Education to determine if there was a violation and what the ramifications would be in the case of a violation.

Megan Tuttle - National Educators Association, New Hampshire

- Ms. Tuttle established that the members of her association welcome parental involvement in their children's education.
- She highlighted the difference between educators being *partners* with parents and educators having a *responsibility* to parents.
- Ms. Tuttle established that educators are given directives from their district and are responsible for the safety and learning of the students. The district administrations are responsible to the parents. She said that her association's members feel their primary responsibility is to their students.

- She expressed concern that House Bill 235 could make it impossible for teachers to balance the distinct desires of parents and school administrations.
- She expressed additional concern that the consequences of a violation of House Bill 235 are tied to the educator's license, not simply their employment. She also expressed concern that school district policies that grant educators the responsibility to ensure the safety and well-being of their students would also, under HB 235, ensure educators are responsible for the safety and well-being of parents.
- She established that the code of conduct was created to evaluate the profession and be a tool for educators to devote themselves to enhancing their practice.
- Ms. Tuttle explained that this bill should be narrowed to better indicate what the legislature wants.
- Senator Altschiller asked Ms. Tuttle if she had experienced parents who are actively co-parenting their children and disagree on the information they want their child to consume in schools. Ms. Tuttle responded that she was confronted with those instances when she was a teacher, and that this bill could exacerbate this issue.