

January 27, 2025

The Honorable Glenn Cordelli, Chair
House Education Policy and Administration Committee
Legislative Office Building, Room 205-207
33 North State Street
Concord, NH 03301

Re: New Futures' opposition to HB 129, relative to the definition of the term
"evidence-based" within public education

Dear Chairman Cordelli, and Honorable Members of the Committee:

New Futures appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony in opposition to HB 129, relative to the definition of the term "evidence-based" within public education. New Futures is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization that solves problems through policy change. We are dedicated to supporting and strengthening a comprehensive and integrated System of Care for children and youth who experience behavioral health challenges in New Hampshire.

New Futures opposes HB 129 as written because it would prevent schools from implementing evidence-based practices that help students perform best in schools.

Currently, evidence-based practices are "derived from or informed by objective science- most commonly, educational research or metrics of school, teacher, and student performance."¹ Simply put, evidence-based practices use data from schools to inform what programs and interventions are used in classrooms. Notably, evidence-based practices are rigorously researched and studied in manners that are widely accepted in the academic community as reliable.

When schools implement evidence-based practices, they have the flexibility to determine which interventions work best on a local level. For example, social-emotional learning is considered a framework that is critical to the academic success, health of students, and safety of schools. Schools implement social-emotional learning through the use of evidence-based practices, which may look different depending on each school's needs. Similarly, the multi-tiered system of support for behavior (MTSS-B), is a framework that schools can choose to implement through various evidence-based practices.

In 2021, the most recent data available, 24.7 percent of high school students surveyed reported seriously considering suicide and 9.8 percent reported a suicide attempt, according to the Youth Risk Behavioral Survey². Social-emotional learning has consistently been linked to decreased

¹ Glossary of Education Reform (2016).

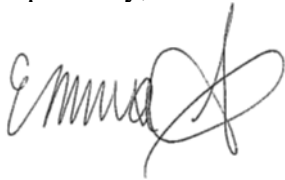
² 2021 YRBS Trend Report, https://www.education.nh.gov/sites/g/files/ehbemt326/files/inline-documents/sonh/2021nhh-trend-report_0.pdf.

emotional distress, more positive attitudes about self and others, and fewer externalizing behaviors and discipline problems.³ Social-emotional learning builds coping skills, resiliency, and emotion identification, which can help reduce symptoms of depression and anxiety in the short term.⁴ Teachers who teach social-emotional learning have lower levels of job-related anxiety.⁵ MTSS-B has been shown to reduce student problem behavior and discipline events, improve family-school relationships, enhance school climate, and improve readiness for learning.⁶ MTSS-B is a statutorily mandated component of the Children’s System of Care.⁷

HB 129 would unnecessarily add a definition in state law for evidence-based practices that conflicts with widely accepted definitions. In particular, the phrase “without regard to peer review” would lower the standards for which schools use to evaluate practices they implement and could exempt some of the already utilized prevention programming used in schools.

With so many young people struggling with mental health, prohibiting evidence-based practices that can help mitigate short-term and long-term mental health consequences would be a severe misstep for New Hampshire. For the reasons presented above, New Futures strongly urges the committee to vote HB 129 inexpedient to legislate.

Respectfully,



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Children’s Behavioral Health Policy Coordinator
New Futures, Inc.

³ Durlak, et al., What We Know, and What We Need to Find Out About Universal, School-Based Social and Emotional Learning Programs for Children and Adolescents: A Review of Meta-Analyses and Directions for Future Research (2022).

⁴ Clarke, et al., Adolescent mental health: A systematic review on the effectiveness of school-based interventions (2021).

⁵ Pennsylvania State University, Teacher Stress and Health Effects on Teachers, Students, and Schools (2017).

⁶ MTSS-B Supporting Literature, NH MTSS-B Technical Assistance Center.

⁷ RSA 135-F.