



Concord Main Office
21 Chenell Drive
Concord, NH 03301
603.228.9680
800.826.3700
888.396.3459 (tty)
603.225.3304 (fax)
www.gsil.org

Dover
800.826.3700

Keene
603.355.1208
877.680.4826

Littleton
603.444.0904
800.588.5772

Manchester
603.518.4600
800.773.4033

Nashua
603.881.7144

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Dear Members of the House Election Law Committee,

My name is Ryan Donnelly. I am an Advocacy Coordinator with Granite State Independent Living. GSIL is a state-wide non-profit organization that advocates and provides services for seniors and people with disabilities who wish to remain independent in their homes and communities. I am writing to you today with concerns regarding HB686, which would require anyone who requests an absentee ballot to provide a copy of government issued photo identification alongside their absentee ballot application, as well as require that absentee ballot applications be notarized. I am concerned that this bill could disenfranchise some seniors and people with disabilities as they seek to exercise their constitutional right to vote. As someone who lives with a significant physical disability, this legislation could impact me as well.

To be clear, these are populations which already face numerous hurdles in casting their votes. Those who choose to vote by absentee ballot on the basis of disability may lack reliable personal transportation that suits their needs or live with a health condition that makes it difficult for them to be out in public. Poverty is also a factor, particularly for people with disabilities. A 2023 report by UNH's Institute on Disability found that 18.6% of people with disabilities in New Hampshire experienced poverty, while the poverty rate for those without a disability was a far lower 5.8%.

To comply with HB686, those individuals who wish to vote absentee but are unable to leave their homes would likely need to pay out of pocket for a mobile notary service, the cost for which can range from \$15 to \$70 an hour depending on location and availability, and may cost even more if significant travel is a factor. For those of little means, this is not a small expense. This legislation also assumes every voter has easy access to a scanner and color printer to make a color copy of valid photo ID, which is simply untrue.

Every vote matters, and to ensure a truly representative government, we must take care that the policies we put into place to safeguard our elections do not inadvertently shut people out of the democratic process. Thank you for the opportunity to deliver my testimony to you, and for all the hard work you perform on behalf of all New Hampshire citizens.

Sincerely,

Ryan J. Donnelly
Advocacy Coordinator