



Conservation
Law Foundation

For a thriving New England

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By Electronic Mail

The Hon. Wayne MacDonald, Chair
Health, Human Services and Elderly Affairs Committee
N.H. House of Representatives
Legislative Office Building
Concord, NH 03301

Re: HB 392, directing the dissolution of the department of health and human services' office of health equity, department of environmental services' functions for civil rights and environmental justice, and the governor's council on diversity and inclusion.

Dear Chairman MacDonald and Honorable Committee Members,

Conservation Law Foundation (CLF) appreciates the opportunity to comment on HB 392. CLF is a non-profit environmental advocacy organization working in New Hampshire and across the region to promote a healthy environment and healthy communities where all people can thrive. CLF's work includes environmental health-related advocacy in Manchester and Nashua, in the North Country, and on a statewide basis. For the reasons below, we oppose HB 392 and urge you to vote this legislation "inexpedient to legislate."

HB 392 Will Harm New Hampshire Residents Who Experience Inequitable Health and Environmental Impacts

The existence of the NH DHHS' Office of Healthy Equity, the NH DES' functions for civil rights and environmental justice, and the Governor's council on diversity and inclusion allows New Hampshire to better serve its residents – in both rural and urban communities – by accounting for historical and current disparities in social determinants of health, in who has access to adequate healthcare, and in who gets to enjoy a safe and healthy environment. As recently as 2022, the National Healthcare Quality and Disparities Report found that disparities in care and outcomes for different racial and socioeconomic groups remain and have increased in some cases¹. These disparities not only affect individuals' health, but also their economic prospects, with health disparities bringing high medical care costs and lost productivity, in addition to economic loss due to premature deaths². By eliminating important resources available to Granite Staters when it comes to health equity, civil rights, and environmental justice, HB 392 would negatively impact health at the individual, community, and environmental levels, and New Hampshire residents' economic wellbeing.

¹ 2022 National Healthcare Quality and Disparities Report. Rockville, MD: Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality; October 2022. AHRQ Pub. No. 22(23)-0030. pp 13-51.
<https://www.ahrq.gov/sites/default/files/wysiwyg/research/findings/nhqdr/2022qdr.pdf>.

² LaVeist TA, Pérez-Stable EJ, Richard P, et al. The Economic Burden of Racial, Ethnic, and Educational Health Inequities in the US. *JAMA*. 2023;329(19):1682–1692. doi:10.1001/jama.2023.5965



HB 391 Will Cause Harm Statewide by Jeopardizing Significant Funds Meant to Protect the State's Environmental Health

The fiscal note accompanying HB 392 notes that the bill, if enacted, could impact receipt of the \$80 - \$90 million in federal funds received annually by the NH Department of Environmental Services, as these funds are tied to compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and other federal mandates. Compared to the projected \$100,000/year decrease in expenditures for FY 2026 – FY 2028, this HB 392 puts New Hampshire at risk of losing up to \$270 million in federal dollars over the same time period. Thus, in addition to jeopardizing New Hampshire residents and communities that are experiencing disproportionate environmental and health burdens, HB 392 jeopardizes the state as a whole, by depriving it of essential federal resources aimed at protecting environmental health and natural resources in New Hampshire.

For the reasons above, CLF respectfully urges the Committee to vote “inexpedient to legislate” on HB 392.

Sincerely,

/s/ Marina Vaz

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