



TOWN OF NEWMARKET, NEW HAMPSHIRE  
OFFICE *of the* TOWN MANAGER

February 14, 2025

House Legislative Administration Committee  
New Hampshire House of Representatives  
Legislative Office Building, Room 203  
Concord, NH 03301

**Subject: Opposition to HB 314**

Dear Members of the House Legislative Administration Committee,

I am writing to express my strong opposition to HB 314. This bill is an alarming overreach that not only seeks to silence local officials but also creates unnecessary financial burdens, restricts the autonomy of municipalities, and establishes excessive penalties for engaging in fundamental speech and advocacy. I urge you to vote HB 314 Inexpedient to Legislate.

HB 314 is deeply problematic for several reasons:

1. **It broadly prohibits a large number of individuals from engaging in the legislative process.** The bill effectively bans local officials from advocating on behalf of their communities, even when legislation directly impacts municipal governance, finances, and operations. It also extends this ban to organizations such as the NH Municipal Association (NHMA), as well as professional groups representing firefighters, police chiefs, public works officials, and many others.
2. **It imposes burdensome and unnecessary financial restrictions.** The bill's vague language could prevent municipalities from using public funds to participate in associations that provide crucial resources, education, and legal guidance—services that save taxpayer dollars by improving government efficiency and effectiveness.
3. **It creates extreme criminal and financial penalties for free speech.** Making speech-related violations a Class A misdemeanor, subjecting individuals to triple financial penalties, and imposing job termination for a “knowing violation” is a disproportionate and dangerous precedent. This level of punitive action is not just unreasonable, it is an attack on the democratic process.

Beyond these fundamental concerns, HB 314 is also bad public policy for the following reasons:

- **It will increase taxpayer costs.** By cutting off municipalities from advocacy efforts that

seek to prevent unfunded mandates and secure state aid, HB 314 will leave taxpayers footing the bill for new expenses that could have been mitigated through coordinated legislative efforts.

- **It undermines local control.** New Hampshire prides itself on local governance, yet this bill strips communities of their ability to make independent financial decisions, including whether to allocate funds for membership in professional organizations that serve their interests. These are choices best left to the voters and their elected local representatives—not dictated by the state legislature.
- **It contradicts New Hampshire's core values.** In the “Live Free or Die” state, it is unthinkable that locally elected leaders could face prosecution for speaking about legislation that affects their communities. Silencing local voices is not only undemocratic but also un-American.

HB 314 is an unnecessary and damaging piece of legislation that would stifle local governance, burden taxpayers, and erode essential rights to free speech and advocacy. I urge the House Legislative Administration Committee to reject this harmful bill and vote Inexpedient to Legislate (ITL).

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



Stephen R. Fournier  
Town Manager