



Office of the Town Manager

February 19, 2025

Representative Gregory Hill, Chairman
House Legislative Administration
Legislative Office Building 203
Concord, NH 03301

RE: House Bill 314 – Relative to prohibiting the use of federal, state, or local funds for lobbying activities

Dear Chairman Hill and Esteemed Committee Members:

I am writing to you on behalf of the Town of Bedford to voice our opposition of HB 314 which is a carbon copy of HB 1479 which failed to pass in 2024 and continues to be bad policy for the State of NH. The opinions of local elected and appointed officials should be encouraged to participate in any discussion of laws (good or bad) that may impact their communities not barred and subject to criminal penalty for doing so.

Bedford is a member of the New Hampshire Municipal Association, a voluntary, nonprofit organization whose membership includes all 234 of New Hampshire's 234 cities and towns. For us and all its members, NHMA is a source of information, assistance, legal counsel, and legislative advocacy on local government issues. Any legislation that creates an obstacle to using our discretion as a board to maintain our membership threatens not only our access to NHMA and similar entities, but also their very existence as a member founded, member-funded organization.

Here are three things to consider about how we use our local funds:

First, as the only organization that provides us with legislative advocacy services, NHMA is a voluntary and member-driven organization that relies on local funds. Those funds are appropriated through the legal, transparent, local budget process led by elected officials who sit on the many boards and committees across New Hampshire. Taxpayers know where their money is going, and they are free to advocate against our membership if they would like. As a result, HB 314 dilutes the authority of town voters as well.

Second, NHMA is far from the only specialty advocate that would be threatened by this sort of law. Many officials and employees in our town and others are members of professional organizations that provide advocacy services, including but not limited to building officials, assessing officials, town and city clerks, planners, police officers, firefighters, public works employees, and school district officials.

Third, these groups deliver valuable services outside their legislative advocacy. They provide training and educational opportunities, often with state partners, to ensure their members understand the law and best practices. Undermining their ability to exist would mean local officials will not receive explanations of the effects of legislation on themselves and their constituents and must try to make public policy without all the information they need. NHMA was founded for local officials by local officials in 1941, with a

recognition that a shared voice to state leaders was more efficient and more effective than local officials from 234 cities and towns attempting to follow all legislation affecting local government.

HB 314 threatens the core concept of local control: local voters making decisions about how local funds are spent. I therefore ask the committee to find any proposed legislation aiming to control how Bedford spends our local budgets and pursue collective advocacy **inexpedient to legislate**.

Thank you for your consideration and please do not hesitate to contact me if I can be of any assistance to you or the Committee in this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Rich Sawyer". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Rich" and the last name "Sawyer" clearly distinguishable.

Richard Sawyer, CPM, AICP
Town Manager