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February 19, 2025

House Legislative Administration  
Legislative Office Building 203  
Concord, New Hampshire 03301

*Re: HB 314 and efforts to limit towns' ability to budget for effective legislative advocacy*

Dear Chair Hill and Members of the Committee:

I write in strong opposition to HB 314 and any legislation intended to make it harder for towns and cities to budget for collective advocacy and information sharing with the Legislature, like 2021's HB 51, 2022's HB 1033 and 2023's HB 1479.

The Town Council has long recognized the effectiveness and efficiency of collective advocacy by consistently approving local budgets which include funds for participation in various associations, whether it be for the Chiefs of Police, the Town Clerks or the New Hampshire Municipal Association. Participation in these groups provide maximum opportunities for information sharing both within these groups and with the Legislature to ensure that sound decisions are made for the benefit of our citizens.

Derry along with every city and town in New Hampshire is a member of the New Hampshire Municipal Association. Membership is voluntary, and NHMA's core services of training, legal counsel and legislative advocacy on local government issues are widely publicized. Thus, every community which voluntarily joins NHMA completely understands the services which are provided and joins to receive those services.

Personally, I have sat on the Board of Directors of NHMA for various stints spanning over two decades. I can attest that NHMA has never received any concerns from governing bodies of New Hampshire towns and cities regarding the propriety of NHMA advocating before the Legislature. In fact, many of us consider advocacy as the primary benefit of joining NHMA.

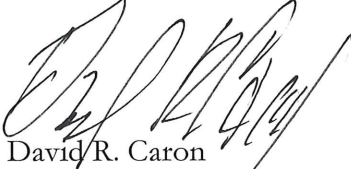
During the last session when HB1479 was considered, proponents of that bill questioned the position NHMA took on various bills. It should be reminded that NHMA staff do not adopt policy positions. Those positions are voted on by its member cities and towns during the Legislative Policy Conference, NHMA's "Town Meeting", during which every member city or town can participate.

The language of HB314 clearly would prohibit municipal officials from advocating before the Legislature unless they registered as lobbyists. Imagine enacting a law criminalizing participation in the legislative process! Even if this section is stricken, you can be assured that restricting the rights of local taxpayers and elected officials to collectively advocate for property taxpayer interests before the Legislature will no doubt produce legislation which will result in unintended consequences and higher property taxes.

Finally, there has been no groundswell for support for this legislation. If so, locally elected governing bodies in our cities and towns would have raised the issue both with the Legislature and NHMA. One can only surmise that the support for the legislation is to restrict public input and accessibility to the legislative process, something which our legislative leaders have stated is antithetical to the goals of a representative democracy.

Please vote HB314 *inexpedient to legislate*.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of the Derry Town Council,



David R. Caron  
Town Administrator