

2025 OFFICERS

March 11, 2025

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NH House of Representatives
House Legislative Administration Committee
Honorable Rep. Gregory Hill, Chairman
Concord, New Hampshire 03301

Re: HB 456 - prohibiting the use of federal, state, or local funds for lobbying activities.

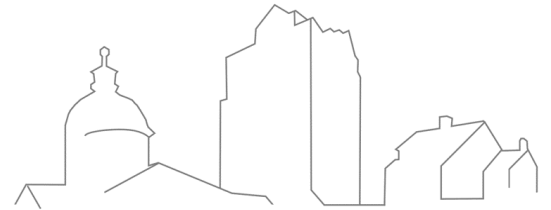
Dear Chairman Hill & Committee Members:

The New Hampshire Association of Assessing Officials (NHAAO) writes to strongly oppose any legislation intended to make it harder for member groups, individuals, towns, cities, or their representatives to budget for collective advocacy, like 2025's HB 456.

The NHAAO is an affiliate 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 their discretion as a board to maintain our membership threatens not only our access to NHMA and similar entities, but also our very existence as a member founded, member-funded organization.

Here are several things to consider about how this bill prohibits professionals from providing important testimony pertinent to upholding the laws of New Hampshire:

- The bill prohibits local officials from any form of advocacy—period. It broadly prohibits any public funds from being used to “lobby, attempt to influence legislation, participate in political activity, or contribute funds to any entity for the purpose of engaging in same.” This would prevent any local official, whether a paid employee or an elected official receiving a stipend, from any advocacy on behalf of a city or town.
- Each town and city shall pay membership dues to the NHAAO pursuant to NH RSA 31:8 “For the encouragement of equitable taxation and the education of public officials...” This legislative distinction of the New Hampshire Association of the Assessing Officials,



the New Hampshire City and Town Clerks' Association and the New Hampshire Tax Collectors Association invites our members to provide testimony and information to the legislature at times when there may be unintended consequences from a particular bill. HB 456 would prohibit our members from providing invaluable insight into our professions which we have dedicated our careers to.

- The NHA AO and its members deliver valuable services outside their legislative advocacy. Our organization provides training and educational opportunities, often with state partners, to ensure our members understand the law and best practices. Undermining our 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 needed.
- The exception that a recipient of public funds who wishes to lobby can do so if they segregate the funds for lobbying from public funds is not workable. Under New Hampshire law, lobbying time and revenue received is reported at the end of each quarter. Because it is not possible to predict the future time spent on advocacy activities, the segregation exception is simply a distraction from the ban that the law creates.

HB 456 threatens the core concept of local control: local voters making decisions about how local funds are spent. When appropriate and if desired, any legislative body can and will limit local funds by voting against such appropriations and expenditures. Equity, fairness and the integrity of our tax system, all of which provide critical guardrails in the protection of New Hampshire taxpayers, are at risk through the elimination of informed, responsible advocacy by public officials. We therefore ask the NH House of Representatives Legislative Administration Committee to find HB 456 legislation, aiming to control how we use our voices and pursue collective advocacy, ***inexpedient to legislate***.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Doug Irvine".

Doug Irvine, CNHA
President
New Hampshire Association of Assessing Officials