



January 11<sup>th</sup>, 2026

Honorable Chairman Noble  
NH House Education Policy and Administration Committee  
Subject: Testimony in Opposition to HB 1221

My name is Louis Esposito, and I serve as the Executive Director of ABLE NH, New Hampshire's statewide grassroots organization working to advance inclusion, access, and full participation for people with disabilities. In that role, I regularly work with families, educators, and school districts across the state to understand how education policy is experienced on the ground. I also come to this testimony as a former paraprofessional and special education teacher, and as a doctoral-level researcher in Educational Leadership focused on how school systems shape identity, access, and belonging for students with disabilities.

I submit this testimony in response to this bill because it proposes a fundamental shift in how special education services are delivered in New Hampshire by moving students toward centralized locations. This is not a minor administrative adjustment. It is a structural change that carries serious implications for civil rights, educational access, and long-term outcomes for students with disabilities.

Placement decisions are among the most powerful tools in special education policy. Where a student is educated determines whether they have access to grade-level curriculum, whether they can form meaningful peer relationships, and whether they are treated as a full member of their school community. Centralized hubs require students to leave their neighborhood schools in order to receive support. In doing so, they weaken both inclusion and accountability.

Federal special education law is built on the principle of the Least Restrictive Environment. This means students with disabilities must be educated alongside their nondisabled peers to the maximum extent appropriate, with supports brought to them rather than requiring them to be moved. Centralized service models reverse that presumption by making separation the default.

My doctoral research examined how students experience identity and belonging as they move through educational systems. One of the clearest findings was that physical

separation sends powerful messages about who belongs and who does not. When students are educated in separate buildings or programs, they internalize that separation. It shapes their confidence, their academic expectations, and their long-term engagement with school. Those effects cannot be undone simply by providing good instruction in a separate setting.

There is also no strong evidence that centralized placements improve academic or social outcomes. What improves outcomes is building the capacity of local schools through staffing, collaboration, training, and inclusive practices. Centralization does not resolve workforce or resource challenges. It simply relocates them while removing students from the environments where they should be learning and growing.

Centralized hubs are often justified as efficient. In reality, the costs are shifted onto students and families through longer transportation, fewer opportunities for peer connection, and reduced participation in school life. They also reduce pressure on districts to build inclusive systems, because the students who most need support are moved out rather than supported in place.

New Hampshire should be investing in strong, inclusive neighborhood schools that can serve all learners. This bill moves the state in the opposite direction by reviving a model of separation that federal disability law was designed to dismantle.

For these reasons, ABLE NH submits this testimony to express serious concerns about how this bill would affect educational access, equity, and long-term outcomes for students with disabilities.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Louis Esposito". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "L".

Louis Esposito, Ed.D.  
Executive Director, ABLE NH