

**Testimony of AFT– NH in Opposition to HB 1221  
Submitted to the House Education Policy and Administration Committee**

The American Federation of Teachers–New Hampshire urges the Committee to reject HB 1221. This bill is not in the best interest of students who rely on academic, behavioral, or other specialized support services to access their *free and appropriate public education (FAPE)* in the *least restrictive environment (LRE)*, as required under federal and state law.

HB 1221 proposes that the state consider consolidating students with higher levels of need into centralized locations. The rationale for this consolidation is not grounded in what benefits students' learning experiences or developmental outcomes, but rather in an attempt to reduce costs. Decisions about student placement must be driven by each student's individualized educational needs—not by budgetary considerations.

Centralizing students with disabilities or other substantial support needs would remove them from their peers and disrupt their connection to their school communities. Such separation denies students meaningful inclusion and undermines their right to an appropriate education in the least restrictive environment. It also weakens school communities as a whole by removing valued members from the daily life of the school.

New Hampshire has long recognized that inclusive learning environments strengthen community relationships, foster understanding, and help all students thrive. HB 1221 would reverse this progress and return the state to a failed and outdated model in which students with greater support needs are educated apart from their peers. As a state, we do NOT want to go back to that dark period in history. This approach isolates students, diminishes opportunities for social and academic growth, and erodes the sense of belonging essential to healthy school communities.

For these reasons, AFT-NH strongly opposes HB 1221 and urges the Committee to reject policies that prioritize cost-cutting over the well-being, inclusion, and educational rights of New Hampshire's students.

We urge you to find HB 1221 Inexpedient to Legislate.