



**Testimony Submitted to the House Election Law Committee
Regarding House Bill 1201
On January 20, 2026**

Dear Committee Members,

My name is Isabella Peters and I am submitting this testimony on behalf of Cornerstone, a 501(c)(4) nonprofit organization advocating for Christian communities and values in New Hampshire. We are not taking a formal position on HB 1201 at this time; this testimony is intended to provide advisory information to assist the committee in its deliberations.

Under existing New Hampshire law (RSA 664:2, III), any 501(c)(4) organization that engages in any form of political advocacy—including advocacy purely on bills or measures—is classified as a "political committee." This broad definition encompasses organizations that promote or oppose measures before the legislature.

HB 1201 is a categorical donor disclosure law that would require these "political committees", like ours, to publicly disclose the identities of all donors. As drafted, the bill would statutorily apply to Cornerstone because we engage in advocacy related to public policy and legislation. If enacted, HB 1201 would therefore mandate full donor disclosure for all such groups, regardless of the scale or nature of their advocacy activities.

We believe this requirement raises serious privacy and constitutional concerns. The U.S. Supreme Court's landmark decision in *NAACP v. Alabama ex rel. Patterson*, 357 U.S. 449 (1958), held that compelled disclosure of an advocacy organization's donor list can violate the First Amendment's protection of freedom of association. In that case, the Court recognized that such disclosures can create a severe "chilling effect," deterring individuals from supporting controversial causes out of fear of exposure, harassment, or other adverse consequences. The Court emphasized that "compelled disclosure of affiliation with groups engaged in advocacy may constitute as effective a restraint on freedom of association" as direct prohibitions on speech or assembly. Alabama failed to demonstrate a compelling justification sufficient to overcome this burden, and the disclosure demand was struck down.

Strong Families for a Strong New Hampshire

P.O. BOX 4683, MANCHESTER, NH 03108 | PH (603) 228-4794
WWW.NHCORNERSTONE.ORG



The same chilling effect would likely occur here if HB 1201 isn't struck down as well. Our donors support Cornerstone's advocacy on sensitive or controversial issues, so forced public disclosure of their identities could easily lead to harassment, threats, doxxing, or social ostracism. Recent examples illustrate this risk:

- ❖ Corporate entities have faced significant pressure to withdraw support from speakers or events on controversial topics. For instance, Holiday Inn's corporate office canceled a planned event featuring detransitioner Chloe Cole due to threats and backlash from activist groups.
- ❖ In December 2023, protesters affiliated with Antifa stormed a Massachusetts Family Institute (MFI) banquet, throwing objects at guests and creating a hostile environment for attendees.

These incidents demonstrate that in today's polarized climate, donor anonymity is often essential to protect individuals' ability to support advocacy without fear of targeted retaliation. Compelled disclosure would likely discourage participation, reduce contributions, and impair our organization's ability to engage effectively in the legislative process.

Moreover, the New Hampshire Constitution provides broader protections for fundamental rights—including free speech and association—than the minimum required under the U.S. Constitution in many contexts. This independent, state constitutional protection further strengthens the case against broad donor disclosure that burdens associational rights without a compelling state interest. *Should HB 1201 be enacted in a form that applies to organizations like Cornerstone, we would have no choice but to challenge the law in court on constitutional grounds.*

We appreciate the committee's careful consideration of these issues and the important balance between transparency and constitutional protections. Committee members who vote against this bill would be acting to safeguard these fundamental rights and would earn respect with our organization for upholding principled governance on this topic.

Respectfully submitted,
Isabella Peters
Digital Communications and Research Specialist
Cornerstone

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