

Statement of Rep. Thomas Oppel, Grafton 9

House Education Funding Committee

1/20/26 - HB 1799

Chairman Ladd and Honorable Members of the House Education Funding Committee.

For the record, I am Thomas Oppel, Representative for Grafton District 9, encompassing the towns of Canaan, Dorchester & Orange.

I am a co-sponsor of House Bill 1799 and I urge this committee to report it out to the full House as Ought to Pass.

It is clear our state faces two urgent imperatives. First, our constituents are facing an economic crisis regarding rising property taxes that for many is becoming existential. Public school funding in many cases is the largest single component of local property taxes.

But New Hampshire ranks last among the 50 states in state support for public schools, and there are three decades of court decisions finding that the state's education effort fails to meet its obligations as outlined in our state constitution. In community after community, voters have signaled their support for public education, despite the impact they know it will have on their property tax bill. Similarly, they have largely rejected arbitrary attempts to cap local spending, a state power grab which would deprive voters of their right to set local school budgets.

House Bill 1799 seeks fairly and appropriately to meet the challenges of reasonable and Constitutional state support for public education and reducing the burden of property taxes. It increases the state's share of public school funding to a level identified in the most recent state Supreme Court decision in the ConVal case as finally meeting our Constitutional obligations. And it does so in a manner that will greatly assist especially less wealthy school districts.

Again, I urge this committee to report this bill to the full House with a favorable motion of Ought to Pass.