

TOWN *of* HANOVER

Town of Hanover, New Hampshire

Testimony in Opposition to HB 1359 and HB 1360

House Legislative Administration Committee – January 22

Chairman and Members of the Committee,

I write on behalf of the Town to express strong opposition to HB 1359 and HB 1360. These bills would weaken municipal representation at the State House, create unnecessary administrative burdens, and significantly diminish local voices in state policymaking.

The Town of Hanover relies on the New Hampshire Municipal Association for education, legal guidance, and advocacy support that helps municipalities navigate complex statutes, comply with evolving state requirements, and understand the real-world impacts of proposed legislation. NHMA's work is guided by its member communities, and its role is essential to ensuring municipal perspectives are accurately and efficiently represented in Concord.

HB 1359 would impose an unworkable and unnecessary requirement that a two-thirds vote of the municipal legislative body be obtained to authorize NHMA to lobby on behalf of a municipality. This approach misunderstands how towns operate and how legislative issues arise and progress. Municipalities cannot reasonably convene formal votes each time NHMA needs to engage on fast-moving legislative proposals.

More importantly, it would be nearly impossible for the Town to monitor all legislation and provide individual testimony on each bill that may impact municipal operations, finances, or local authority without negatively affecting Town operations or incurring additional costs through increased staffing. NHMA exists largely to prevent that inefficiency by keeping towns informed and advocating based on collective member guidance. HB 1359 would undermine that model and shift additional administrative and financial burdens onto municipalities.

HB 1359 also appears intended to require NHMA to separate and bill its educational, legal, and advocacy services independently. This would disrupt NHMA's business model and likely raise costs for municipalities, including Hanover, without any clear public benefit. This is the legislature trying to

micromanage a private, non-governmental organization in a way that is not applied to other membership organizations.

HB 1360 would establish a legislative oversight commission to review NHMA's finances, activities, and use of public funds, along with new reporting requirements beyond those applied to other non-profit entities receiving public funding. This is a serious concern. The audiences NHMA routinely advocates to would be tasked with overseeing NHMA's activities—effectively enabling the state government to control an organization that helps municipalities communicate impacts from the front lines. This structure risks silencing municipal advocacy and limiting open, honest participation in the legislative process.

As a member of NHMA, the Town of Hanover supports NHMA's efforts to keep towns informed about pending legislation and to develop position statements based on guidance from its member communities. NHMA's role enhances civic participation and improves lawmaking by ensuring legislators hear practical, operational impacts from communities across New Hampshire.

For these reasons, the Town of Hanover respectfully urges the Committee to recommend INEXPEDIENT TO LEGISLATE (ITL) on HB 1359 and HB 1360.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully submitted,



Robert Houseman ([he/him](#))
Town Manager