

January 21, 2026

The Honorable Wayne McDonald, Chair
House Health, Human Services and Elderly Affairs Committee
Granite Place
Concord, NH 03301

Re: New Futures' testimony in favor of HB 1653 (relative to emergency medical care provided at freestanding hospital emergency facilities)

Dear Chair McDonald and Honorable Members of the Committee:

New Futures appreciates the opportunity to submit testimony in support of HB 1654, which protects patient choice and ensures fair, transparent transfer practices at freestanding hospital emergency facilities (FHEFs). New Futures is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization that works to solve New Hampshire's problems through policy change. In this role, we work extensively with policy makers, health care providers and families to increase access to quality, affordable health care across the Granite State.

Across New Hampshire, community hospitals are under strain, and corporate expansion strategies—particularly the rapid growth of freestanding emergency departments—are reshaping local health care markets. When HCA acquired Catholic Medical Center, it discontinued key community programs¹ while simultaneously pursuing new, high-cost freestanding emergency departments in other service areas. These facilities operate with minimal transparency and often create confusion for patients who believe they are seeking care at their community hospital.

This creates real harm for patients. Patients at FHEFs are not clearly informed that they are in a facility owned by a different hospital system, often outside their local service area. When patients request transfer to their community hospital, they are frequently discouraged—told that tests have already been ordered or that transferring will result in duplicated services and higher costs. These practices limit patient autonomy and steer patients toward the corporate system that owns the FHEF, not the hospital they trust.

HB 1653 addresses this problem directly. The bill ensures that patients receiving emergency care at a freestanding emergency department have the right to transfer to the acute-care hospital of their choice, not just the facility that owns or operates the FHEF. This is a basic protection of patient rights, transparency, and fair competition in our health care system.

¹ Including the Healthcare for the Homeless program, the Poisson Dental Care Center, and other services.

At a time when New Hampshire is seeing an influx of urgent care centers and other lower-acuity options, claims that additional freestanding emergency departments are needed to relieve “crowded EDs” are not supported by the evidence. What is clear, however, is that patients deserve honest information and the freedom to choose where they receive hospital-level care.

HB 1653 is a modest, necessary step to ensure that corporate ownership does not override patient choice. It protects consumers, supports community hospitals, and reinforces the principle that emergency care decisions must be driven by patient needs, not revenue.

For these reasons, we respectfully urge the Committee to support HB 1653.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

Sam Burgess
Director of Healthcare Policy
New Futures