

AFT-NH Testimony in Opposition to HB 1122
To the House Education Policy Committee



Chairman Noble and Members of the Committee,

My name is Debrah Howes, President of AFT-New Hampshire. I am here today on behalf of our 3,500 members who work in preK–12 public education, in public services, and in private and public universities across the Granite State. We are New Hampshire taxpayers and citizens, and many of us are parents or grandparents of public school students.

I am here to express AFT-NH opposition to **HB 1122**.

HB 1122 is, plain and simple, a state mandate. It requires every school district to offer—and every high school student to take—a course in hunter education, wildlife management, and firearm responsibility. Public schools already operate under extensive statutory requirements for adequate education, and this bill piles on yet another unfunded, state-imposed mandate that pulls time and resources away from core academics.

Even with amendment 2026-0183h, this bill still forces districts to opt out through an affirmative 2/3rds vote of the legislative body and forces parents to opt their children out of the course. If districts and families must take formal action to avoid a requirement, then it is a mandate—no matter what label is used.

Hunter education already exists for families and students who want it. New Hampshire requires hunter education before a first-time hunter can purchase a license, and Fish & Game offers courses statewide. The question is not whether hunter education is valuable. The question is why the State would require every student to take it during the school day while offering no dedicated funding—especially when many districts are already stretched thin and the State continues to fall short of its constitutional obligation to adequately fund public schools.

The bill's reliance on Pittman–Robertson grants is no solution. Those grants require local matching funds, and most districts simply do not have spare dollars available. Mandating a course for all students just to access federal grant money that does not directly benefit student learning is not responsible policymaking.

Our public schools exist to support students and their learning across the whole robust curriculum outlined in **RSA 193-E:2-a**. Public schools do not exist to generate future license fees or chase federal funds. Requiring all public school districts to teach hunter education—and all students to take it—does not place students' needs at the center of school district decision-making. That is simply wrong.

If the Legislature wishes to expand access to hunter education, it should remain what it is now, locally decided, voluntary, and opt-in—available as an elective or extracurricular offering where interest exists, and aligned with existing Fish & Game curriculum.

For these reasons, on behalf of AFT-NH teachers and school staff, and the students we serve, I urge you to find **HB 1122** “Inexpedient to Legislate.”

Thank you.

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President, AFT-New Hampshire