

To the honorable members of the House Municipal and County government committee:

My name is Andrew Harmon, and I am a resident of New Hampton, NH. I am writing in opposition to HB 1427-FN, limiting the authority of a municipality, county, or school district to issue bonds. As a member of a local town that has often supplemented serious projects – such as a crumbling public safety building – with a mixture of financial instruments including a major bond, I am deeply concerned about the nature of this bill. I am especially concerned about the language stating “provided that a finding by a local governing body made in bad faith or with fraudulent intent shall subject the members voting in favor to personal liability under RSA 31:39-a and other applicable laws.” While I understand the laudable goal of protecting the citizens of a given town from “bad actors”, this language is extremely vague, and I am concerned in the extreme should such a bond be issued somehow fraudulently, any member of the town who votes for this bond would suddenly be in danger of legal and financial consequences.

Furthermore, the imposition of specific categories upon a town of what can be handled by way of a bond completely by-passes any form of local control the town would practice. If a bond is not necessary, it is incumbent upon the town to make that case to their citizens, and to educate them in either deliberative sessions within “SB 2” towns or by other methods in towns that do not follow this method of town warrants. The members of the town then can authorize or deny the pursuit of those bonds, thus ensuring that necessary purposes are served. It is also somewhat confusing to me that there are so many different carve-outs for issuances of bonds under the proposed bill, despite the proposed idea be bonds are only issued under “emergency” circumstances. The purposes mentioned are almost all of the main purposes that I have ever heard of a town needing to pursue a bond, such that I cannot possibly see what purpose requiring a town have to go before a judicial body to prove the necessity of the bond they wish to pursue. Such efforts could have negative impacts on the budget for the town, putting further stressors on budgets and town boards that are already stretched to the maximum.

I thank the committee for taking the time to read this testimony, and I again urge you vote inexpedient to legislate on this bill.

Sincerely

Andrew Harmon, concerned citizen