

To: New Hampshire House Transportation Committee
Re: HB 1703, bicycle and e-bike registration and annual fee
From: Joe Ciarcia, M.S. Applied Psychology (MSAP), Londonderry, New Hampshire
Date: January 27, 2026

Statement of opposition

I am writing in opposition to HB 1703. HB 1703 is a statewide fee-and-enforcement scheme that will reduce cycling participation among price-sensitive residents, impose a disability tax on those who use cycling as part of mental health self-management or who are prohibited from driving, such as people with epilepsy, and create a regressive cost burden on low-socioeconomic-status households. It is also fiscally unsound given that compliance and net revenue are indeterminable, while administrative and enforcement costs are substantial.

Core Fiscal Design Flaw

HB 1703 creates a statewide program without a credible cost model or a defensible estimate of revenue. The fiscal note readily admits that revenue is indeterminable and that the number of bicycles and e-bikes in New Hampshire is unknown. Further, the key unknown is not limited to the number of bicycles in New Hampshire, but rather the number of people who will comply with a recurring annual fee and documentation requirement, vs. those who will risk riding without registration because they consider the legislation unjust, or they simply cannot afford the fee.

In practical terms, this bill requires a registry, data management, a credential system, renewal workflow, customer support, and coordination with enforcement. Those functions require staffing, information systems, materials, and ongoing operating expenses. A statewide program with significant fixed costs and indeterminable participation is neither a reliable, nor a responsible funding mechanism for infrastructure. It is likely to cost the state more to administer and enforce than it will raise in revenue, while still imposing substantial burdens on residents and visitors.

Regressive Burden on New Hampshire Households

A recurring per-bicycle fee is a regressive policy design. It consumes a larger share of income for low-income households than for higher-income households.

Consider a low-income family of four in New Hampshire with four bicycles:

Under HB 1703, the household faces a \$200 per year fee to remain compliant. That amount competes with rent, heating, food, and medical copays. The proof-of-ownership requirement further burdens households that rely on used bicycles, gifted bicycles, or older bicycles for which documentation may not exist. When compliance is not feasible, the bill adds the risk of a

\$100 fine. That fine structure is not a neutral incentive, but rather a monetary sanction that can compound hardship for households already under financial strain.

Discriminatory Burden for Disability and Mental Health Self Management

Many people use cycling as more than recreation. It is transportation, symptom management, and a reliable method of maintaining mood stability and daily functioning. For individuals who cannot drive due to a disability such as epilepsy, or who experience mental health symptoms that respond to routine physical activity, cycling can be a primary coping that benefits mental and physical health. A recurring fee, documentation requirement, and risk of fines will deter use among those who are most sensitive to costs and administrative demands.

From a behavior change standpoint, this bill adds barriers to behavior that supports physical and mental health. Barriers do not affect all residents equally. They concentrate harm in individuals with limited disposable income, limited time flexibility, disability related constraints, and limited access to alternative transportation.

Tourism and Cross-Border Economic Risk

HB 1703 also creates a tourism deterrent that is straightforward.

Consider a family choosing between Maine, Vermont, and New Hampshire for a family vacation:

A family from Massachusetts considering a cycling-oriented weekend in Maine, New Hampshire, or Vermont would face a materially different experience if New Hampshire imposes annual registration fees, proof-of-ownership requirements, and a requirement to carry proof of registration while riding, backed by fines. Even when the fee is affordable, the administrative steps and uncertainty create deterrence. In tourism markets, small barriers shift decisions at the margin. Those marginal decisions are exactly what determine lodging, dining, and retail spending.

This concern is not hypothetical in context. New Hampshire has already experienced serious losses in Canadian tourism revenue associated with political tensions and rhetoric caused by the Trump administration. Northern New Hampshire businesses that depend on Canadian visitors are especially exposed. Adding a new statewide barrier for cycling visitors and families is the opposite of what an economically prudent state tourism strategy would do under current conditions.

Public Health and Environmental Policy Contradiction

HB 1703 undermines New Hampshire public health policy goals.

1. Cycling supports physical activity, and physical activity reduces morbidity and mortality risk.
2. Increased cycling can reduce short car trips, which reduces local pollution and greenhouse gas emissions.
3. More active transportation reduces long-term healthcare costs by reducing chronic disease burden.
4. Built environment investments directly influence physical activity and active transportation choices.

A policy that taxes cycling and adds administrative barriers will predictably reduce cycling among those most sensitive to cost and administrative burden. If the state wants a healthier population, lower healthcare costs, and lower emissions, the policy direction should be to expand safe cycling infrastructure and remove barriers to cycling, not impose recurring fees and monetary sanctions on cyclists.

Requested action

I respectfully request that the committee vote against HB 1703. If the committee wishes to address infrastructure funding, it should do so through a fiscally credible approach with transparent accounting, without regressive per-bicycle fees, documentation barriers that penalize used bike riders, and enforcement mechanisms that are either infeasible or constitutionally problematic.

Sincerely,

Joe Ciarica, M.S. Applied Psychology

Londonderry, NH