



AMERICAN ATHEISTS

February 2, 2026

The Honorable Rep. Kristin Noble
Chair, House Education Policy and Administration Committee
107 North Main Street
Concord, New Hampshire 03301

Re: OPPOSE HB 1778, Undermining Quality of Public Education

Dear Chairperson Noble and Members of the House Education Policy and Administration Committee:

American Atheists, on behalf of its constituents in New Hampshire, writes in opposition to HB 1778, a controversial and hyperpartisan bill that would undermine the quality of education. Despite the claim that this bill will end discriminatory practices in New Hampshire's public education system, it will exacerbate the problem by limiting necessary discussions, preventing administrators from taking action against discriminatory conduct, and teaching a censored view of American history. New Hampshire's schools should promote critical thinking and encourage the free exchange of ideas, not rewrite history and limit free speech. We strongly urge you to reject this far-reaching government censorship bill.

American Atheists is a national civil rights organization that works to achieve religious equality for all Americans by protecting what Thomas Jefferson called the "wall of separation" between government and religion created by the First Amendment. We strive to create an environment where atheists are accepted as members of our nation's communities and where bigotry against our community is seen as abhorrent and unacceptable. We promote understanding of atheists through education, outreach, and community-building, and work to end the stigma associated with being an atheist in America. As advocates for religious equality and intellectual freedom, American Atheists believes all students deserve a quality education that equips them with the tools necessary to become successful adults, capable of navigating a diverse and pluralistic society.

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HB 1778 cynically assails legitimate efforts to ensure all New Hampshire students are included, represented, and respected at their schools. This bill would censor needed conversations about the experience of Black, Latino, Indigenous American, and LGBTQ+ communities. As a result, students from all backgrounds will have more difficulty achieving academic success; be less likely to graduate high school; and will not receive the education necessary to become successful adults, capable of navigating a complex and multicultural society due to the ideological and state-sanctioned sanitization of curricula.

The real-world consequences of bills like HB 1778 go far beyond the plain meaning of the statutory text. Vague, pro-censorship legislation creates fear among well-meaning educators and other public employees who directly influence classroom instruction. For example, a Texas administrator, fearing penalization under similar legislation, instructed teachers that they must teach both sides of the Holocaust and required all classroom content on the subject to include a pro-Nazi perspective.¹ These bills also empower those with hyperpartisan agendas to ban books from classrooms and school libraries² and exacerbate ongoing teacher shortages by driving out veteran educators.³ The chilling effect that bills like HB 1778 have on free speech and learning environments undermines the quality of public education in the state and ultimately harms both students and schools in an attempt to censor certain viewpoints.

If HB 1778 were enacted, New Hampshire's public schools will be forced to confront irresolvable conflicts. Public schools are subject to both state and federal nondiscrimination statutes meant to protect students and staff from unlawful

¹ Mike Hixenbaugh & Antonia Hylton, *Southlake School Leader Tells Teachers to Balance Holocaust Books With 'Opposing' Views*, NBC News (last updated Oct. 15, 2021),

<https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/southlake-texas-holocaust-books-schools-rcna2965s/southlake-texas-holocaust-books-schools-rcna2965> (a school administrator reminded staff "to remember the concepts of [House Bill] 3979," which contained nearly identical provisions to HB 1778, by including all perspectives on the Holocaust).

² See Jenny Gross, *School Board in Tennessee Bans Teaching of Holocaust Novel 'Maus'*, The N.Y. Times (Jan. 27, 2022), <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/01/27/us/maus-banned-holocaust-tennessee.html> (a school board banned literature portraying the realities of the Holocaust).

³ See Tyler Kingkade, *Critical Race Theory Battles Are Driving Frustrated, Exhausted Educators Out of Their Jobs*, NBC News (July 12, 2021),

<https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/critical-race-theory-battles-are-driving-frustrated-exhausted-educators-out-n1273595> ("Ant-DEI" and "divisive concepts" bans have forced teachers and administrators across the country to leave their positions – voluntarily or not).

actions based on protected classes, including race, color, religion, sex, national origin, disability, and age. Consequently, heavy-handed censorship measures, like those proposed by this legislation, pose a significant risk for schools. As written, HB 1778 could result in an environment where school administrators find themselves unable to address genuine instances of discrimination due to concern about violating state law. The bill's language would incentivize administrators to ignore discriminatory incidents so that they will not be seen as promoting "personal identity ideology." This would create an unsafe and disruptive learning environment for students⁴ while simultaneously exposing the school to legal liability for failing to comply with existing nondiscrimination laws and regulations. Should administrators choose to act in the best interests of their students, families, and educators by complying with nondiscrimination mandates, the school would nonetheless still risk liability for violating New Hampshire state law. In other words, under HB 1778, public schools will risk legal action no matter what they do.

Although proponents of this bill will suggest it is an attempt to stop indoctrination, it is, in fact, a clear effort to impose a partisan perspective on students and monopolize the marketplace of ideas to the detriment of all New Hampshire residents. The inclusion of diverse perspectives in public schools is not an attempt to chill speech or indoctrinate. It is an evidence-based method to increase graduation rates and

⁴ Melanie Killen & Adam Rutland, *Promoting Fair and Just School Environments: Developing Inclusive Youth*, 9(1) Policy Insights from the Behavioral & Brain Sci. 88 (Feb. 23, 2022), <https://doi.org/10.1177/23727322211073795> (the classroom environment created by discriminatory behavior negatively impacts students' psychological well-being and prevents them from achieving their academic potential).

academic performance of all students.⁵ We urge you to reject government censorship and, instead, ensure students have the knowledge and resources they need to be successful members of the workforce and our democracy.

Should you have any questions regarding American Atheists' opposition to HB 1778, please contact me at vanderson@atheists.org.

Sincerely,



Victoria Anderson
State Policy Specialist
American Atheists

⁵ See, Bracken Reed, *How Equity Has Helped Close the Graduation Gap for Latino Students in One Oregon District*, Inst. of Ed. Sci. (Sep. 2018), <https://ies.ed.gov/use-work/resource-library/resource/other-resource/how-equity-has-helped-close-graduation-gap-latino-students-one-oregon-district> (school district was able to significantly increase the graduation rate of Latino students by ensuring students' diverse backgrounds were represented in every aspect of school life, from curriculum choices to planning school events); Mary E. Kite & Patricia Clark, *The Benefits of Diversity Education: An Inclusive Curriculum Offers Important Positive Outcomes*, Am. Psychological Ass'n (Sep. 8, 2022), <https://www.apa.org/ed/precollege/psychology-teacher-network/introductory-psychology/benefits-of-diversity> (students who are provided with an inclusive curriculum showed improved critical thinking skills and higher overall achievement levels); Enrica Ruggs & Michelle Hebl, *Diversity, Inclusion, and Cultural Awareness for Classroom and Outreach Education*, Rice Univ. (2012), https://teach.ufl.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/ARP_DiversityInclusionCulturalAwareness_Overview.pdf (integrating diversity, equity, and inclusion principles into public school STEM programs eliminates barriers for students from historically underrepresented backgrounds improves students' performance).