

January 30, 2026

House Finance Committee
Granite Place, Room 230
Concord, NH 03301

Chairman Weyler and members of the House Finance Committee:

I am writing in support of HB1399. Despite the moratorium on school building aid and a limited taxpayer base, Claremont voted in 2013 to move forward with fully funding the \$12.5M high school renovation project. This was a matter of necessity as our accreditation had been downgraded from a warning to probationary status for facility issues, and we could not wait. Funding this has been a hardship for many, even more so now that the school district is navigating its way through a \$5M dollar deficit. I ask that you vote in favor of allocating school building aid for a portion of this project.

The successful vote of 2013 was not our first attempt to address our facility issues at Stevens High School. After being warned that our accreditation was in jeopardy, the school board presented a renovation plan to the public for a vote in 2010. At the time, a moratorium did not exist, and we were eligible for 60 percent school building aid. We needed 60 percent of the voters to support the plan, and we lost it by one vote. A year later, the Legislature placed a moratorium on the school building aid program. In 2012, we received notification that the high school accreditation had been downgraded to probationary. Regardless of the moratorium, we had to act. In 2013, the public voted again on a renovation plan and nearly 63% of the voters supported it.

The Claremont community, time and again, has invested in its students and community. We did what was needed in 2013 to bring our high school into compliance. When two bonds matured several years later, the funds used to pay them were then reinvested into a multi-million-dollar downtown revitalization project, attracting new developers and businesses and expanding our tax base. When funding school extracurricular activities was no longer possible due to the deficit, the community raised the money to fund them, and our high school female soccer team brought home the championship.

We did all of this because investing in our future was the right thing to do. However, the community's ability to self-fund long term projects is limited. This is especially true as we ask taxpayers to bear the burden of a school deficit not of their making. We have eight more years of payments for the school renovation loan which will total \$17M with interest. A vote in favor of HB1399 supports strategic investment and is less costly had school building aid been available in 2013.

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