

AFT-NH Testimony Opposing CACR 28



To Chair Noble and Members of the House Education Policy and Administration Committee

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

On behalf of our members, their families and the people they serve, I respectfully urge you to vote Inexpedient to Legislate on CACR 28.

CACR 28 would repeal and reenact Article 6 of the New Hampshire Constitution to authorize towns, parishes, bodies corporate, and religious societies to elect and contract with public Protestant teachers of piety, religion and morality, grounding public instruction in evangelical principles. It also provides additional constitutional protections only to Christian denominations. These changes conflict with the existing Article 6, which guarantees **equal** protection for all faiths and prohibits subordination of one sect to another.

This proposal raises serious constitutional concerns and has very real consequences for the people who live, work, and learn in our communities. I want to briefly share several personal stories that reflect the lived experiences of those who would be affected.

A veteran English teacher told me she worries that under CACR 28, she would be disqualified from her job simply because she does not belong to a Protestant denomination. The amendment authorizes religious societies to have the exclusive right to select public school teachers. She asked if, “my years of experience, my training, and my dedication suddenly matter less than my religious denomination?” This fear is real, and it undermines trust in our public institutions.

A local Jewish family shared with me that their two children already feel “different” in certain school settings. The possibility that their public-school teacher could be hired specifically to teach “evangelical” morality made them worry that their children would be subject to instruction that conflicts with their faith. They told me, “We chose public schools because they belong to everyone.” CACR 28 threatens that inclusive foundation.

A Christian parent in our community, active in her church, explained that she opposes CACR 28 because she believes faith should be nurtured at home and in houses of worship—not mandated through public education. She feels the amendment risks politicizing her own religion and weaponizing it in public settings. She said, “My faith doesn’t need the government’s help.”

One student described how meaningful it is to have teachers who make all students feel welcome, regardless of their beliefs. She worries that CACR 28 would allow her school to hire teachers chosen by a specific denomination, making peers of other faiths feel less safe or seen. For her, public schools are the “one place everyone should belong,” and CACR 28 jeopardizes that.

This amendment raises concerns about putting the New Hampshire constitution in conflict with the US Constitution. CACR 28 permits religious control over public-school hiring, which conflicts with the Establishment Clause. It risks coercive religious exposure for students and families, infringing on Free Exercise rights. It gives preferential treatment for Christian denominations raises Equal Protection concerns.

CACR 28 is not simply a symbolic amendment; it would reshape public education, undermine religious neutrality, and create divisions within our communities. The personal stories I’ve shared illustrate what’s at stake: teachers’ livelihoods, students’ sense of belonging, families’ freedom of conscience, and the integrity of our state constitution.

For these reasons, I urge the committee to find **CACR 28** Inexpedient to Legislate.

Debrah Howes



President, AFT-New Hampshire