

Testimony to the New Hampshire House of Representatives Committee on HB1214

Bill Number: HB1214

From: Daniel Whitney, Meredith

Writing in Opposition to Bill HB1214

Hearing Scheduled On:

Tuesday, February 10th at 2:10 PM at 1 Granite Place in Concord

Summary:

- HB1214 dismantles a proven system
- Trustees provide focused, nonpolitical stewardship
- Library independence protects against political pressure
- Libraries serve the whole community across all worldviews
- Trustees counterbalance the harms of technology on youth
- Local governing bodies are already overburdened
- HB1214 removes a key safeguard without benefit

Mr. Chair and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to convey my closely held belief regarding the New Hampshire Libraries and the network of supporting governing bodies. My Name is **Daniel Whitney**, and I serve on the **Board of Trustees for the Meredith Public Library**. I am here as a traditional conservative and someone who believes deeply in preserving the institutions that have served New Hampshire communities well for generations.

I want to acknowledge the vital work this New Hampshire House of Representatives Committee does. You carry the responsibility of weighing proposals that affect every town in our state, and I offer my comments with full respect for that role.

HB1214 proposes an abrupt shift in library governance from independent Boards of Trustees to a town's governing body. While I understand the desire to streamline government, this bill unintentionally dismantles a structure that has worked exceptionally well for more than a century.

New Hampshire's library trustees are not activists or political actors; they are neighbors, taxpayers, and publicly elected stewards of a public trust, ensuring decisions remain nonpolitical and community focused. Our primary role is to uphold community standards and ensure the library remains a place where every resident—regardless of age, background, or worldview—has access to high-quality, literature-based materials. Trustees bring best practices, professional ethics, and the long-standing standards that keep libraries balanced, apolitical, and community-centered.

This independence is not a loophole or an outdated tradition. It is a safeguard that builds community trust by protecting the library from political pressure, ensuring decisions are made with the community's best interests in mind, and fostering confidence in the library's stability.

I also want to speak to a concern that many of us share as parents, grandparents, and community members. We see the challenges facing our young people in an age dominated by screens, algorithms, and the constant pull of digital distraction. Technology has its benefits, but it can also narrow attention, weaken critical thinking, and erode the habits that build character. A strong library—guided by trustees who understand the importance of real literature, history, and the written word—offers a counterbalance. It provides a place where children and teens can encounter stories that build virtue, self-awareness, and resilience. These are the foundations of responsible citizenship, and they are not easily replaced once lost.

HB1214 would place library governance on the shoulders of local governing bodies that already carry the weight of roads, zoning, public safety, budgets, and countless other responsibilities. I have great respect for our Select Board in Meredith. Still, library stewardship requires a different kind of attention—steady, apolitical, and focused on long-term community benefit rather than short-term pressures.

The question I respectfully raise is this: **What problem is HB1214 trying to solve?** Our libraries are not failing; they are among the most trusted institutions in our towns, serving families, seniors, students, and yes, traditional conservatives like me. Because trustees ensure that the shelves reflect a full spectrum of ideas, not just the fashionable ones, we can trust that the current system works well and serves the community effectively.

An independent Board of Trustees is not a barrier to good governance. It **is** good governance. It is a structure that has protected intellectual freedom, community standards, and responsible stewardship for decades. HB1214 removes that safeguard without offering evidence that such a change is needed.

I urge the Committee to reject HB1214 and uphold the proven trustee system that has faithfully served New Hampshire. Preserving independent boards ensures community trust and effective governance, which should be strengthened, not dismantled.

Thank you for your time and for your service to our state.

Daniel Whitney

Member, Meredith Library Board of Trustees

Saturday, February 7, 2026