



New Hampshire Association of Conservation Commissions

SERVING NEW HAMPSHIRE'S COMMUNITIES SINCE 1970

TO: House Municipal and County Government Committee
FROM: Barbara Richter, NHACC Executive Director
DATE: February 10, 2026
SUBJECT: Written testimony regarding HB1691

Thank you, Madame Chair and Members of the committee for the opportunity to comment on HB1691. The New Hampshire Association of Conservation Commissions opposes this bill and we ask you to vote Inexpedient to Legislate. **The success of the Current Use law is testament to NH values.**

Since 1973, Current Use law has been an important tool encouraging the protection of NH's natural areas, farms and forests. **Current Use is key to ensuring that NH remains a healthy, desirable place to live, work and visit.** Current use is critical to keeping natural areas wild and scenic for the future, and helps to stabilize the tax base. Current use taxation is based on the **income producing capacity** of the land, providing fair taxation for NH Citizens. RSA 79-A has already established that natural areas are a public benefit and should be protected and that open space imposes few costs on local government and therefore is an economic benefit to its citizens.

As you know, land conservation can help stabilize property taxes by guiding growth and limiting the need for municipal services. Natural areas provide immeasurable benefits of clean air and water and current use helps landowners keep property in a natural state as referenced in this report; [The Benefits of New Hampshire Open Space](#). Studies of the Land Use Change Tax (LUCT) show that when land comes out of current use, towns receive all of their foregone tax revenue, and then some. Towns often use the LUCT to purchase land for conservation purposes providing additional economic and public benefits.

House Bill 1691 is overly restrictive and subjective, undermining the goals of Current Use, and ultimately reducing the public benefits supported by the Current Use Law. The language in the bill restricts a municipalities ability to approve Current Use in their communities. In addition, HB1691 arbitrarily restricts Current Use to 75 percent of rural zones, which limits the private property rights of landowners who seek to include their lands in Current Use.

The definitions of the zones where restrictions apply are so complicated that the bill would be a burden on municipalities and appraisers. Section III contradicts the purpose of Current Use by requiring specific agriculture and forestry practices, again limiting private property rights of landowners. Enforcement of these requirement would be a burden on municipalities and landowners.

Vote ITL on HB 1691 to protect your constituents.

1. Ensure that New Hampshire's natural resources remain, as they are critical to our economic vitality.
2. Support landowners' rights. This bill is a tax increase for all taxpayers and infringes on property owners rights and local control.

Respectfully submitted,

Barbara Richter
NHACC Executive Director

The NH Association of Conservation Commissions is a nonprofit organization which serves the 217 municipal conservation commissions in the state. Our mission is to foster conservation and appropriate use of New Hampshire's natural resources by providing assistance to conservation commissions, facilitating communication and cooperation among commissions, and helping to create a climate in which commissions can be successful.