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I am the Chair of the Chamberlin Free Public Library, Greenville, Board of Trustees, and a lifelong library patron.

Please vote NO on HB 1214.

HB 1214 upends New Hampshire's long-standing approach to library management: Library trustees are elected to govern all aspects of library activity, financial and otherwise. This is a bill that attempts to solve a problem that doesn't exist. The existing law works fine, and there is no reason to change it. If the community is unhappy with the library trustees, their solution is to vote trustees off the board. In my Town of Greenville, the majority of the library board of trustees may be voted off every second election. To take library governance out of the hands of the elected library trustees and place it into the hands of the Selectmen would add unnecessary bureaucracy and give decision-making power to people who may not have the library's best interests or mission in mind.

Library trustees are elected to serve as stewards of the library. Selectmen are elected to manage town government. These are two different goals requiring different skill sets. These trustees oversee ONLY the library, which makes them better able to handle the workings and financial responsibilities of the library. Selectmen have many other duties and financial responsibilities, and focus on a wide variety of issues, and cannot be expected to devote time and energy to understanding the needs of the library's patrons.

In 2025, Greenville's library, Chamberlin Free Public Library (CFPL), was without a director for three months. The Trustees, individually and as a group, assumed responsibility for securing and organizing the CFPL electronic and paper files, ensuring bills were paid and materials ordered, all while conducting a search for a new director and carrying on with regular library-related responsibilities. With all due respect to the Selectmen, there are not enough hours in the day for them to ensure the smooth operation of both Greenville and the CFPL for an extended period of time. As a resident of Greenville, I want my Selectmen to focus on managing Greenville; I do not want my Selectmen to debate and revise library policies.

New Hampshire's public libraries have long stood as bastions of free access to information, of safe spaces for exploration, and of champions of intellectual freedom. Libraries invite the public to come in and learn: to share ideas and experiences. The independence of public libraries from influence by political entities is essential to their functioning as sources of free and unbiased services to their communities. Libraries are independent of town government and should stay that way to ensure there is no partisanship involved in the

information-gathering or disseminating process. By seeking to replace the library trustees with elected town officials, this bill inserts politics and partisanship squarely into the library.

The separation that currently exists between the library and the government provides the independence that the library requires to fulfill its mission. The public relies on the library for free access to a wide variety of materials to become informed members of a democracy. Library trustees ensure that a broad range of materials are on the library shelves: the patron makes the decision whether to walk past an item or check it out and take it home. Government officials should have no role in deciding what materials are on the shelf. Libraries are anchor institutions in New Hampshire towns that, by the current RSA, are more removed from the political whims of the day by having a separate elected board of library trustees for governance. This bill puts too much power in the hands of people who may or may not have the best interests of the library in mind. It leaves the library very vulnerable to changing political whims. Such a situation might well diminish or destroy an invaluable, irreplaceable public resource.

Thank you.