



STATEWIDE PROGRAM OF ACTION TO CONSERVE OUR ENVIRONMENT

Tuesday, February 10, 2026

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Rep. Diane Pauer, Chair NH House of Representatives Municipal and County Government Committee Room 154, Granite Place Concord, NH 03301

RE: Opposition to HB 1691 on Current Use

Chair Pauer and Members of the House Municipal and County Government Committee:

S.P.A.C.E. was founded in the late 1960s as NH's Current Use Coalition advocating for the Constitutional Amendment in 1968 that allowed for the Current Use law. S.P.A.C.E. continues to advocate for one policy – to keep Current Use strong in New Hampshire. Current Use does that by assuring property tax assessments are consistent with their use as farm or forestland.

That is why we are strongly opposed to HB 1691. HB 1691 will essentially gut the Current Use law by setting limits to the amount of land allowed in Current Use by zoning categories, parcel size and restricts the activities allowed on land that stays in Current Use. These changes thereby "kick out" thousands of Current Use landowners from the program. It is impossible to determine upfront how many landowners would no longer be in Current Use or how many acres would be affected. Current Use is the foundation of open space protection in the Granite State and is the bedrock of the working farms and forests and open spaces that make New Hampshire such a beautiful place and a place where farms and forests are integral to rural economies and the residents that depend on them.

I have tried contacting the sponsors of this bill without success (no returned phone calls or emails) to learn of their motivation for this terrible bill. From others I have learned that this bill was filed to assist in efforts to encourage more affordable housing in the State by "freeing up" some Current Use land. I believe the sponsors do not understand the Current Use law in that regard. The approximately 3 million acres of farm, forest and other undeveloped land in Current Use is available for development today. This happens by the landowner making a decision to develop their land. Once the land changes in use to a developed state, the Change Use Penalty of 10% of the assessed value of the changed land is assessed by local assessing officials and the revenue goes to the town.

HB 1691 would destroy the rural fabric and economies of New Hampshire's open space lands. Further, the bill would create a nightmare of administration for local assessing officials who would be charged with determining which land qualifies for Current Use and assuring that new restrictions on their use as farm and forestland would be enforced.

New Hampshire's Current Use law is envied by other states due to its simplicity and the fact that it works extremely well to fulfill the laws intent – to keep working lands working and protect our beautiful landscape so important to tourism. I urge you to vote ITL on HB 1691.

Cordially,

Handwritten signature of Charles A. Levesque

Charles A Levesque Chair, S.P.A.C.E.

cc: Members of the M&CG Committee