

## Opposition to HB 1691 – Concerns regarding Current Land Use

Dear Representatives,

I am writing to express my opposition to HB 1691, specifically regarding its proposed changes to New Hampshire's current use program.

For decades, the current use law has been a cornerstone of New Hampshire's efforts to protect open space, working forests, and farmland. By assessing land according to how it is actively used rather than its potential development value, the program promotes voluntary conservation while honoring private property rights. HB 1691 threatens to unravel this well-balanced and effective framework.

By imposing new restrictions, limitations, and management requirements on land enrolled in the current use program, this bill departs from the program's original intent. Instead of incentivizing conservation, it discourages participation by making enrollment more complex, prescriptive, and uncertain for landowners. Many current use parcels are family-owned forests, farms, and open lands that rely on flexibility in management to remain economically viable.

The bill also raises serious concerns for outdoor recreation, scenic landscapes, public health, and New Hampshire's tourism economy. Land enrolled in current use provides essential access for walking, hiking, hunting, snowmobiling, wildlife observation, and other low-impact outdoor activities that are central to our quality of life and a major driver of tourism, which is essential, especially in rural communities. The resulting loss of open vistas, forested ridgelines, and rural character would fundamentally alter the landscapes that define New Hampshire. Some landowners may even choose to close their land entirely to public uses if current use laws are weakened by this bill.

The current use program has been successful precisely because it prioritizes outcomes like keeping land undeveloped rather than mandating uniform land management practices. HB 1691 risks replacing a voluntary, incentive-based conservation model with a regulatory and punitive approach. This shift would undermine the state's long-standing conservation and scenic beauty goals and reduce protected open space.

Changes of this magnitude deserve careful, separate consideration. Altering the foundations of the current use program without clear evidence of widespread abuse or failure introduces unnecessary risk to a system that is broadly regarded as a success. For these reasons, I urge you to oppose HB 1691.

Thank you for your time and for your service to New Hampshire.

Respectfully,  
Kerri Murphy

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