



NEW HAMPSHIRE  
LAND TRUST  
COALITION

54 Portsmouth Street  
Concord, NH 03301

February 10, 2026

The Honorable Diane Pauer, Chair  
Committee on Municipal and County Government  
New Hampshire House of Representatives  
Granite Place, Room 154  
Concord, New Hampshire 03301

Dear Madame Chairwoman and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for accepting this testimony regarding House Bill 1691, proposed legislation which would place limitations and qualifications on lands enrolled in current use. The New Hampshire Land Trust Coalition (Coalition) strongly opposes H.B. 1691 and would ask the Committee to find it Inexpedient to Legislate.

The Coalition represents a group of twenty-seven land trusts that operate across the state of New Hampshire, which collectively serve the Granite State's conservation interests by acquiring and stewarding land and conservation easements for key public purposes such as open space, wildlife habitat, low-impact recreation, agriculture, and forestry. The Coalition advocates for the policy interests of these land trusts and for strong conservation policy in New Hampshire.

Signed into law more than fifty years ago, the Current Use program is New Hampshire's most effective means of incentivizing landowners to keep property undeveloped, focusing on the open-space benefits of their land rather than its commercial value. As the Declaration of Public Interest for the program, codified at RSA 79-A:1, states: "It is hereby declared to be in the public interest to encourage the preservation of open space, thus providing and health and attractive outdoor environment for work and recreation of the state's citizens, maintaining the character of the state's landscape, and conserving the land, water, forest, agricultural, and wildlife resources. It is further declared to be in the public interest to prevent the loss of open space due to property taxation at values incompatible with open space usage." By entering their property into Current Use, a landowner bolsters these dual public interests: their property remains undeveloped and is taxed at its income-producing capability as farmland or forestland, not at its saleable value given the development pressures in the Granite State today.

The Coalition strongly supports a continued Current Use program that encourages landowners to maintain undeveloped lands and offers a viable alternative to traditional tax valuation. The Coalition's land trust members themselves enroll property in Current Use as a long-term management strategy. At present, the program creates clear burdens and benefits for landowners, with a manageable administrative burden at the municipal and state level.



NEW HAMPSHIRE  
LAND TRUST  
COALITION

H.B. 1691 threatens to weaken the Current Use program landowners and to complicate the program's administration at multiple levels. Specifically, the Coalition foresees that the legislation now before you would undermine the open-space conservation goals of the Current Use program:

- By introducing subjective standards for town approval of properties entering current use, creating uncertainty for landowners about the eligibility of undeveloped properties.
- By restricting municipalities from approving more than a certain percentage of subjectively defined town zones for Current Use eligibility.
- By adding land-management requirements for land now or subsequently enrolled in Current Use, which contravenes the original statutory "intent...not to require management practices" for enrolled properties.
- By creating ambiguity about the potential retroactive effect of the proposed legislative provisions, including new management requirements that may not fit best practices in timber harvesting, wildlife-habitat support, and agricultural operation.

In all, the proposed legislation would undercut a key statutory incentive for land conservation in New Hampshire and sow confusion among landowners who have chosen to maintain open lands in keeping with RSA 79-A. Please find H.B. 1691 as Inexpedient to Legislate. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Andy Deegan, President

New Hampshire Land Trust Coalition