

TO: Chairwoman Pauer and members of the House Municipal and County Government Committee

FROM: MacKenzie Nicholson, Co-Senior Director, MomsRising NH

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Thank you Chairwoman Pauer and members of the House Municipal and County Government Committee for allowing me to submit this testimony in opposition to HB 1214, relative to public libraries. My name is MacKenzie Nicholson and I am the Co-Senior Director of MomsRising New Hampshire, an on-the-ground grassroots organization representing thousands of moms and their families across the Granite State.

For moms, caregivers, and families in New Hampshire, public libraries are the trusted center of our communities. They are where kids fall in love with reading, where families access free programs and services, where teens find safe places to learn and explore, and where people from all walks of life come together without barriers.

Libraries work because they are governed by independent library trustees who are focused on stewardship, access, and the long-term public good. This structure helps ensure libraries serve everyone in the community, including families with different values, beliefs, and lived experiences, without being pulled into day-to-day political fights.

HB 1214 allows a municipality to remove governing authority from library trustees and transfer that power to the municipal governing body, reducing trustees to an advisory role. While this may sound like a small governance change, it represents a major shift in how public libraries operate in New Hampshire.

Under this bill, the independence of library governance is removed and libraries are placed directly under political control. Decisions about library policy, collections, staffing, and administration would no longer be buffered from election cycles or political pressure. That shift alone raises serious concerns.

Beyond governance, the bill also creates legal and financial complications for towns and cities that are not addressed in the text of the legislation. Many libraries have long-standing obligations tied to buildings, donations, and agreements that were made under trustee governance. Shifting control could create confusion, disputes, and unexpected costs for municipalities. But even if you set those issues aside, the core problem remains.

At the heart of this bill is its impact on access to books and information. By shifting library governance from independent trustees to municipal governing bodies, HB 1214 lowers the barrier for political interference in library collections. Organized pressure campaigns would no longer need to work through established library policies. They would only need to influence a small number of elected officials.

This concern is not theoretical. We have already seen efforts in New Hampshire and across the country to politicize public institutions and restrict access to certain books, particularly those that reflect diverse families and life experiences. Libraries should not become the next front in culture-war politics, yet this bill makes that outcome more likely.

It is also important to remember that library trustees are already elected or appointed locally. Communities that are unhappy with library governance already have a democratic process to make changes. HB 1214 is not fixing a broken system. It is creating new problems where none are needed.

For families, libraries represent trust, access, and community. HB 1214 undermines all three. It invites instability and political pressure into institutions that work best when they are steady and focused on serving the whole community. **For these reasons, we respectfully urge the committee to vote no on HB 1214.**