

AFT-NH Testimony opposing HB 1669
From AFT-NH Pres. Debrah Howes
Feb. 11, 2026



To Chairman Noble and Members of the House Education Policy and Administration Committee

My name is Debrah Howes, President of the American Federation of Teachers–NH. I am here today on behalf of our 3,500 members who work in preK through grade 12 public education, in public services, and in private and public universities across the Granite State. We are taxpayers and citizens of New Hampshire, and many of us are parents or grandparents of public-school students.

I want to express our concerns that **HB 1669**, while well-intentioned and filled with kind sentiments, fails to address the real, urgent needs in many of our Granite State public schools.

This bill, **HB 1669**, offers aspirations, not action. It lays out a “Teacher Bill of Rights” including statements about safe schools, civility, respect, and professional autonomy. However, these provisions are just statements of principles without requiring any district, administrator, or policymaker to make concrete improvements. The bill lists rights such as a “safe and healthy school environment” and the expectation of “civility and respect”, but it includes no mechanisms to create, fund, or enforce those conditions.

Teachers already know they deserve respect. What they need is support to do their jobs.

HB 1669 provides no funding or staffing to address real school conditions

- Every educator in our state is facing growing pressures:
- Increased student behavioral needs
- Rising mental-health challenges
- Larger class sizes
- Insufficient paraprofessional, counseling, and special education staffing
- Unsustainable workloads

Yet **HB 1669** provides no additional funding, no staffing mandates, and no resources to improve teacher working or student learning conditions. It requires only that districts publish this “bill of rights” on their website—nothing more.

- A public posting does not reduce class sizes.
- It does not add counselors.
- It does not provide planning time or support for struggling students.

HB 1669 reaffirms existing law instead of improving it. The bill asserts that teachers “have the right” to share educational or safety information with parents unless restricted by law. But this is already governed by FERPA, which the bill itself references. Nothing in HB 1669 expands teachers’ rights beyond what federal and state laws already allow.

Similarly, the bill states that teachers have the right to discipline students—but only as permitted by existing school board policy. If local discipline policies are inadequate, this bill does nothing to correct that.

In other words, **HB 1669** leaves the status quo fully intact.

Essentially, **HB 1669** has no accountability, no enforcement, and therefore, no impact. A “right” with no avenue for recourse is not truly a right.

HB 1669 contains:

- No complaint process
- No investigatory process
- No consequences if a teacher’s “rights” are ignored
- No expectations for districts to change practices

It tells teachers they have rights but gives them no way to exercise or defend them. Without enforcement or accountability, these statements have no practical effect on classroom realities.

Simply put, symbolic legislation risks minimizing real problems.

Educators are grappling with substantial challenges:

- Underfunded schools
- Chronic shortages in special education and behavioral support
- Insufficient mental-health services
- Outdated facilities
- Growing paperwork demands
- Student needs that outpace available staff

By passing a bill that simply tells teachers they already have the right to respect, safety, and civility, the Legislature risks sending a message that teachers’ struggles can be solved with encouragement rather than meaningful investment.

Symbolic policy may feel supportive, but it does not improve teaching and learning. In fact, it can obscure the need for real solutions, such as:

- Increased school funding
- Improved staffing ratios
- Enhanced student mental-health supports
- Stronger discipline frameworks
- Expanded professional development
- Competitive compensation

These are the tangible changes that would actually help teachers support all students as they learn.

We truly appreciate the effort to recognize the dignity and professionalism of New Hampshire educators. But **HB 1669** is a symbolic gesture when educators need substantive support. It declares ideals without delivering action.

Teachers do not need a list of rights posted on a website.

They need the Legislature's commitment to improving working conditions, learning conditions, and the resources available in every public school.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge this Committee to find **HB 1669** Inexpedient to Legislate and instead focus on legislation that meaningfully addresses the real-world challenges facing our teachers and students.

Sincerely,

Debrah Howes



President, AFT-New Hampshire