



February 17, 2026

Honorable Chair DeSimone
NH House Children and Family Law Committee
Subject: Testimony in Support of HB 1215

Dear Honorable Chair and members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of HB 1215. For the record my name is Krysten Evans, and I serve as the Director of Policy for ABLE NH, a statewide disability justice organization that works to protect and expand the civil and human rights of people with disabilities across New Hampshire. Our mission is rooted in dignity, autonomy, privacy, and civil rights.

At its core, this bill is about dignity. It is about autonomy. It is about recognizing that communication is not a privilege to be granted when convenient. It is a fundamental human right.

For individuals with developmental disabilities, communication is often the gateway to everything else: safety, education, healthcare, relationships, and self-determination. When someone cannot use their preferred method of communication, whether that is AAC, a letterboard, sign language, or a speech-generating device, they are effectively silenced. And when someone is silenced, they are vulnerable.

HB 1215 makes something unmistakably clear. Individuals receiving services under our state system have the right to communicate using the method that works for them. That clarity matters. Too often, families and individuals tell us stories of devices left on shelves, of staff unfamiliar with communication tools, of students discouraged from using the very supports that allow them to express themselves. This bill says that is not acceptable.

It also requires trained professionals, including direct support staff, educators, and healthcare providers, to make reasonable efforts to accommodate preferred communication methods. That is not an extraordinary ask. It is a basic expectation in a system that claims to serve and support people.

Communication is how someone says "I'm in pain."

Communication is how someone says "No."

Communication is how someone says “I want this,” “I don’t feel safe,” or “This is who I am.”

When we fail to support communication, we fail to protect rights. We fail to protect safety. We fail to see the person in front of us.

New Hampshire has an opportunity here to lead, to affirm that people with developmental disabilities are not passive recipients of services, but full human beings with voices that matter. HB 1215 strengthens our system by centering those voices.

ABLE NH strongly urges you to pass this bill. Because when we protect communication, we protect freedom.

Thank you for your time and your consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Krysten M. Evans".

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