

## **AFT-NH Testimony Opposing CACR 24**

Debrah Howes, President AFT-NH

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

My name is Debrah Howes, President of the American Federation of Teachers–NH. I write 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.

On behalf of my members and the tens of thousands of Granite State public school students we serve, I write in strong opposition to **CACR 24**.

This proposed constitutional amendment is not just a simple affirmation of a parent's right to choose an educational setting for their child: a public school, a private school, home education, a micro school or learning pod, an online program or some combination of these. We agree every parent has a right to make that choice for their own child's education. **CACR 24** is a sweeping and absolute mandate to direct the child's education including the curriculum, day to day classroom experiences, and choice of lesson materials that would undermine the rights of thousands of public school students to a stable, consistent, and constitutionally adequate education.

By inserting a declaration that parents and guardians "have the right to direct the education of their children" in the New Hampshire Constitution with no limits, definitions or guardrails, this amendment creates an overriding individual parental right that undermines the shared public responsibility to ensure every child in the Granite State has access to a constitutionally adequate public education. The amendment also sets up conflict within our public schools when parents whose children are in shared public spaces have very different ideas of how they want to direct their education. **CACR 24** would give each parent an unlimited right.

Students will feel the consequences first. Public schools depend on statewide academic standards that provide every student with consistent instruction, regardless of location or family background. If each parent has an unlimited right to direct their own child's education, what happens when a parent objects to one or more of the statewide academic standards? What if they direct that their child be taught nothing to do with a particular standard or a whole subject area that is required for all other students? Is that child truly getting a complete and adequate public education if they are repeatedly opted out of standards that are considered essential?

**CACR 24** would generate constant conflict within classrooms. Parents could challenge established curriculum, interfere with lesson planning, or demand the removal of instructional materials based solely on personal preference. Even organizations that support the amendment acknowledge that it establishes a powerful new constitutional right with wide ranging implications. These conflicts will erode the predictable learning environment that students need to thrive. It is students' learning opportunities that will be diminished.

Teachers and school staff will be placed in an impossible position. Their responsibility is to meet state academic standards and to help all students learn and thrive. **CACR 24** invites competing directives from multiple parents and makes it harder to provide consistent instruction to every student. This increases stress on educators and accelerates staffing shortages. The students who will suffer most are those who rely most heavily on strong public schools, including students with disabilities, English language learners, and those from low income families.

Public education is a public good. According to the Reaching Higher Report [The Whole Picture of Public Education in New Hampshire](#) what is best for our public school students in the Granite State is strong public schools supported by the collaboration among educators, families and communities, along with policies that keep public dollars focused on serving all students. **CACR 24** undermines this foundation by prioritizing individual demands over community responsibility and shared accountability.

For the sake of New Hampshire's students, I urge you to vote No on **CACR 24**.

Sincerely,

Debrah Howes



President, AFT-New Hampshire