

February 23, 2026

Dear Chair Noble and members of the Committee,

I currently serve as Chair of the Rochester School Board and as President of the New Hampshire School Boards Association. I am writing to you today based on my experience in local and statewide school governance. I intended to testify on Monday but given the date change, I am unable to make it in person. I want to respectfully express my opposition to HB 1358, the bill that would create a commission to study transitioning all public schools to public charter schools

While this bill is framed as establishing a commission to “study” transitioning all public schools to charter schools, it represents a sweeping and destabilizing shift in New Hampshire’s public education system.

In Rochester, our tax dollars are scarce. Our community works hard for every dollar it contributes to our schools. That makes accountability not just important, but essential. Our current system is governed by locally elected school boards that are directly answerable to voters. If families have concerns about spending, curriculum, or student outcomes, they know exactly who to call. The voters hold us accountable at the ballot box in each municipal election.

A wholesale transition to charter schools would fundamentally alter that structure. Charter schools operate under different governance models, often with appointed boards rather than elected ones. Those models reduce direct voter oversight and weakens the transparency our taxpayers deserve, especially in property-tax-dependent communities like mine, where every dollar must be carefully managed.

As President of the New Hampshire School Boards Association, I work with school board members across the state: Democrats, Republicans and independents. They come from small rural towns as well as our cities. What I hear consistently is that communities value local control and clear lines of accountability. Charter schools can serve as valuable options within public education, but they were never intended to replace the entire public school system.

Converting all public schools into charter schools would create uncertainty for families, educators, and students. It would would fragment funding, governance, and services, particularly for our most vulnerable learners.

Before launching a commission to explore dismantling our current structure, we should clearly define the problem we are trying to solve. In Rochester as well as communities across New Hampshire, what we need is stable funding, strong local governance, and clear accountability, not structural upheaval. For these reasons, I respectfully urge you to vote “Inexpedient to Legislate” on HB 1358.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

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