

SB 101 Testimony (Marianne Springer, Danville NH)

I oppose SB101 in its current form. I've heard comments about letting "the money follow the child" to support choice in education. If any money should follow the child to support choice, why should the amount be any higher than the state's adequate education contribution and the education property tax paid by the family? I suspect that amount would generally be significantly less than 80 - 100% of the per pupil cost in a sending district. Also, if a child has any special education needs, those should be provided and paid for by the chosen school/district, not the district of residence.

Residents of a school district should not have to bear any tax burden related to out-of-district education for their neighbors who prefer not to use the local education services that are state-mandated and locally provided.

Even if you support the concept of open enrollment and competition across school districts, this bill is quite flawed. There is no timeline provided for when a parent might apply to another school and/or decide to enroll their child at that school. School districts already deal with some unpredictability regarding enrollment numbers when staffing schools. The budget for an upcoming school year is finalized 6 months before the school year starts. Under this bill, a district could face a wonderful infusion of revenue from students transferring into their district, however, the likelihood is that this would occur after tax rates are set and have been passed on to towns and taxpayers. Similarly, they could face an unanticipated and disastrous outflow of taxpayer money to support the out-of-district choices. This could happen at any time prior to or even during the school year.

At a bare minimum, any mandated open enrollment should include application and decision deadlines, similar to college applications.

Please oppose the state-mandated Open Enrollment contents of SB101 and HB751. Requiring all public schools to send 80-100% of the per pupil cost in their district to an out-of-district school for students choosing another school is an UNFUNDED state mandate and therefore violates Part 1 Art 28-A of the NH Constitution. There is no immediate way for any sending school district to reduce expenditures by the 80-100% cost-per-pupil tuition payment for each departing student, therefore local property taxes would increase for at least some districts unless the STATE fully funds this mandated tuition transfer. Under this bill, local residents and taxpayers have no opportunity to vote to authorize or reject this program and its potential associated cost.

If you support state-mandated Open Enrollment, please ensure that the program is fully state-funded without increasing local property taxes for anyone in NH.