

Testimony in Support of SB 101

NH House Education Committee - Submitted by Peter Rondeau, Brookline NH

I am a resident of Brookline NH per RSA 654:1. We own a home in Brookline NH and pay property taxes on this home which fund public education.

This bill would help remove towns with a discriminatory bias and attitude from using their power to enforce this bias in conflict with state and federal law.

When asking the SAU 41 Superintendent about our community attending school, the Superintendent responded "It is not allowed per the agreement, and we would stop it prior to a completed enrollment. We then verify annually." (that no students from our community are attending).

Brookline public officials have said about our community that they want to eliminate it because it is low cost housing, and so it doesn't become a revenue-heavy impact if our community claimed welfare or our children attended school.

Town officials knew that excluding our community from schools and services may not be legally enforceable — and chose to continue the policy anyway rather than risk a court ruling citing fear that our community would have access to "all the normal and usual services, thereby imposing a significantly greater financial burden on the town."

Under the Federal McKinney-Vento Act and as implemented in New Hampshire under RSA 193:12, public education is available even to the homeless.

Under the bias of town officials, coordinated with the SAU 41 office, we are offered fewer rights — public education in this instance — than the homeless, all while funding the very institutions we're prohibited from using. Under this bias, the Town of Brookline has created a second class of homeowners. Some have even been told they would be denied ambulance service.

The path to justice for our community involves a U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development — Office of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity investigation and civil litigation, but what about the others who cannot afford these fights? Where are their children's educational rights?

This bill would help remove the bias found at the local level and align it back with the law.

Some Brookline residents have stated publicly that the level of property taxes you pay determines your right to the benefits of residency — voting, library access, vehicle registration, ambulance service, and school enrollment. In other words, civil rights in Brookline are for sale, priced by tax bill.

I am in support of this bill being passed because it directly benefits my family and those in our community that are currently restricted from attending the town's public school due to legally questionable motives.

Thank you for this bill and its implications on liberty and justice for all, not just the favored classes.