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4/1/2026

Dear Members of the House Executive Departments and Administration Committee,

My name is Ryan Donnelly. I am a Policy Analyst with Granite State Independent Living. GSIL is a state-wide non-profit organization that advocates and provides services for older adults and people with disabilities who wish to remain independent in their homes and communities. I am writing to you today in support of SB488, which would enable the governor to declare a state of emergency when neither a state budget nor a continuing resolution has been passed by July 1 of the first year of a biennium.

This bill is about protecting the people of our state from avoidable harm. When a budget is not passed on time, the consequences are immediate and real. Critical services may be disrupted, nonprofit partners may see their funding impacted, and vulnerable residents, including seniors, people with disabilities, children, and families in crisis are put at risk. We were but a hair's breadth away from seeing this unfold during an especially fraught state budget process last year, which initially failed despite assurances from all parties that a compromise had been secured. Thankfully, the '26-'27 passed out of the legislature on another try, though it squeaked through on a single vote alone.

SB488 provides a necessary safeguard. It does not replace the legislature's responsibility to pass a budget, nor does it diminish the importance of negotiation and compromise. Instead, it establishes a backstop, ensuring continuity of essential services when the normal process breaks down. Importantly, the bill recognizes that a failure to pass a budget is, in effect, a governance emergency. Just as we empower the executive branch to respond to natural disasters or public health crises, we should also empower it to respond to a breakdown that jeopardizes the functioning of government itself.

This authority should, of course, be exercised with clear limits, transparency, and accountability. The emergency declaration should be time-limited, focused on maintaining essential operations, and subject to legislative and public oversight. SB488 has such guardrails, striking an appropriate balance between preserving democratic processes and ensuring continuity of government. Ultimately, this bill is about responsibility. The people of this state should not bear the consequences of political impasse. They deserve a government that functions reliably, predictably, and in their best interests, even when elected officials disagree.

With this in mind, I hope that you and other members of the committee will choose to support SB488, which is a practical, commonsense measure to protect residents, stabilize services, and uphold the basic promise of government: to serve the public, no matter the circumstances. Thank you for the opportunity to deliver my testimony, and for all the hard work you perform on behalf of all New Hampshire citizens.

Sincerely,

Ryan J. Donnelly
Policy Analyst