State of New Hampshire

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

CONCORD

New Hampshire
Legislative Youth Advisory Council
Annual Report
July 16, 2023

TO: **Honorable Christopher Sununu, Governor**
Honorable Sherman Packard, Speaker of the House
Honorable Joseph Bradley, President of the Senate
Honorable David Scanlan, Secretary of State
Honorable Paul Smith, House Clerk
Honorable Tammy Wright, Senate Clerk
Honorable Michael York, State Librarian

FROM: **Representative Jodi Nelson**
Legislative Co-Chair, Legislative Youth Advisory Council
James Thibault
Vice Chair, Legislative Youth Advisory Council

SUBJECT: **Annual Report: New Hampshire Legislative Youth Advisory Council Chapter 19-K**

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A LETTER FROM NEW HAMPSHIRE LEGISLATIVE YOUTH ADVISORY COUNCIL VICE CHAIRMAN JAMES R. THIBAULT

Dear Governor Sununu, Speaker Packard, President Bradley, and Secretary Scanlan:

Pursuant to RSA 19-K, the Legislative Youth Advisory Council is statutorily obligated to "[m]eet no fewer than 4 times per year," and to "[f]ile an annual report of its activities, including any recommendations for proposed legislation,". I am sorry to share, however, that there is very little to report as we were unable to meet frequently or during the General Court session. This was due to our youth co-chair being unresponsive to numerous requests to meet to organize the council and neglectful of his responsibilities as chair. Therefore, this report cannot make any recommendations from NHLYAC to the General Court for the coming session. Rather, this report contains the details of the three meetings we were able to conduct, as well as one statement regarding legislation drafted and adopted by NHLYAC.

Our goal for the coming year is to resurrect the prior success and collaboration historically maintained by NHLYAC by introducing new measures, including adopting new rules for the Council. Additionally, NHLYAC lost several members to resignations and term limits. The Council encourages you, the appointing officers, to consider and appoint new Council members that exemplify rigorous dedication to NHLYAC obligations and New Hampshire values. That way, we may function even better in the future as a conduit for youth discussion on policy and become a greater place for well-balanced, logical recommendations that reflect the ideological variety of our incredible state.

With regards,

James R. Thibault

Vice Chairman, New Hampshire Legislative Youth Advisory Council

NEW HAMPSHIRE LEGISLATIVE YOUTH ADVISORY COUNCIL

ACTIVITIES

November 2022 - July 2023

MEETINGS

The Council is to meet no fewer than four times a year.

This year, the Council started later than the anticipated August time frame due to delays in the appointment process, instead starting in November.

The Council held its orientation and seminar in accordance with RSA 19-K:3(III) on Wednesday, 8 February, 2023.

The Council met in the Legislative Office Building on the following date:

Wednesday, 8 February, 2023
Thursday, 13 July, 2023

The Council met virtually, in accordance with RSA 19-K:3(IV) on the following dates:

Monday, 14 November, 2022
Sunday, 16 July, 2023

INTEREST GROUPS & OFFICERS

In order to work more effectively, the Council focused the list into the five broad areas to create the following interest groups:

Climate Action
Criminal Justice
Education
Legislative Administration
Social Justice

Members interested in each area would have worked together to research bills filed by the legislature to make recommendations to the Council. Each interest group elected a liaison to call interest group meetings and deliver reports to the Council. The Vice-Chair was tasked with managing the interest groups. This system allows for interested members to deeply study a bill before bringing discussion before the whole Council. It also serves the function of familiarizing Council members with the legislative process by having them follow bills through our committee process, as well as the committee process of the General Court. However, due to our lack of meetings, only one statement got approved by the Council this year.

The Council produced the following statement on a bill (statement attached at the end of report):
HB352 - Referred to Education, written by Vice Chairman and Education Liaison James Thibault

Officers
2022-2023
Youth Co-Chair: Hunter Porter
Vice Chairman: James Thibault
Secretary: Sophia Biondolilo
Outreach Coordinator: Hailey Venuto

CONCLUSION

In the seventeenth year since the Council's formation, it has failed to meet the expectations of previous years. Despite COVID-era restrictions being lifted, the Council was actually worse-off. The work put in by previous co-chairs Rep. Joe Alexander and Loreley Godfrey has been squandered, and now the Council is in a state of disrepair and inefficiency. The Council saw several resignations over the past year due to this, and it is unfortunate that these members will have to miss out on their opportunity to learn more about the General Court firsthand in the future, in addition to what they and the rest of the membership have already lost in the past year.

Next year, an effort will be made to ensure that this does not happen again and that the membership will have the best possible opportunities to engage with the General Court and New Hampshire government more broadly. At our final meeting of the Council year, the Council voted to remove the youth co-chair and have the vice chair take on the duties of the chair for a more effective and expedient transition into the next Council year. In addition, the option of instituting rules is being explored, as well as other ways to better communicate, schedule, hold irresponsible officers accountable, and more generally make the experience of being a member of LYAC less confusing and bothersome. With the increased number of vacancies due to resignations and term expirations, the Council also encourages the appointing officers — the Governor, Speaker of the House, President of the Senate, and Secretary of State — to capitalize on this opportunity to make the Council more ideologically representative so that the Council may better reflect the views of all youth within our incredibly politically varied state. This way, it may engage in more interesting and stimulating debates and discussions that produce more robust and thorough recommendations for the General Court and better experiences for all members.

LYAC MEMBERS 2022-2023

The Council saw several members choose to resign prematurely this year. The Council thanks them for their work and their contributions during their time.

This year, the Council welcomed members from as far north as Etna and Hanover and as far south as Nashua and Salem. Having youth of New Hampshire, north and south, rural and urban, represented on the Council is incredibly important, as it is one factor in the ideological variety that is so critical for a Council like this to run. The work that the membership has put in is very much appreciated, as has been their patience over the last Council year.

Bold - Resigned * - Officer

Student *(alphabetical by surname)*	**Town**
Sophia Biondolillo*	Manchester
Sawyer Cook	Tuftonboro
Emma Curtin	Sanbornton
McKayla Dockham	Silver Lake
Loreley Godfrey	Portsmouth
Carson Goh	Hanover
Wyatt Lake	Etna
Gabrielle Patterson	Dover
Hunter Porter*	Nashua
Grace Sorenson	Salem
Harrison Spalthoff	Goffstown
Harold Stokes	Hopkinton
Tess Sumner	Danbury
James Thibault*	Tilton/Franklin
Rolf Vanbibber	Amherst
Hailey Venuto*	Portsmouth

New Hampshire Legislative Youth Advisory Council
107 North Main St, Concord, NH 03303

20 March 2023

The Honorable Rep. Rick Ladd
House Committee on Education
LOB Room 207
33 North State St.
Concord, NH 03301

RE: HB352

Dear Chairman Ladd and Members of the Committee,

The Legislative Youth Advisory Council encourages you to vote HB352, relative to excused absences due to a student's mental or behavioral health, Ought To Pass (OTP).

As our Council is primarily composed of students, across a spectrum of public, private, and charter schools in New Hampshire, our members can attest to the impact poor mental health can have on school performance. Whether students are diagnosed with a mental health disorder or are simply overburdened, mental health is an essential aspect of health. Requiring schools to create an excused absence policy that validates mental health absences is an important step in recognizing this.

HB352 further outlines the required opportunity for students to make up any missed schoolwork. We consider this clause critical to any excused absence policy. Oftentimes, in the face of poor mental health, students are discouraged from taking the time to address it as they worry their schoolwork will suffer. This can become an almost self-fulfilling prophecy when they either power through, notwithstanding their exacerbating mental health, or take time off but become inundated with missing assignments.

When students have the time and resources to address their mental health, they are much more academically and socially adept. Mental health is health. A vote for this legislation is a vote for Granite State students' mental health. Please vote Ought To Pass (OTP) on HB352.

Sincerely,

The New Hampshire Legislative Youth Advisory Council