



Your State House Concord, New Hampshire



February 7, 2020

To my constituents in [Allenstown](#), [Epsom](#), & [Pittsfield](#):

This week, my committee met to recommend bills to the full House. The most important ones dealt with enhancements to pensions for public employees. HB 1205 gives early-retiring teachers and employees 10% more in their pension check for up to two years. Right now, early retirees (average retirement age is 62, minimum 60) get this bonus until age 65; the bill extends it to 67 (or the Social Security age.) We voted, 11-8, to pass it. HB 1341 repeals some of the changes made in 2011 for non-vested police, fire and corrections officers, to the tune of **\$140 million** more in pension system unfunded liability. We voted 14-5 to pass it. We also passed, 12-5, HB 1235, a committee to study further enhancements to the retirement system!

The cost of these changes will be folded into the retirement system payments made by towns and school systems for the next 20 years. I and the bipartisan minority of the committee believe that granting these pension enhancements without funding just downshifts the cost to the property taxpayers. And I strongly doubt that the state will contribute to the local payments as it used to: the localities have full control of how many employees they have and what they are paid. A state subsidy will encourage hiring more teachers or police or firemen than citizens are willing to pay for from their property taxes. And, as we saw last year, even with a massive surplus, the legislature declined to either subsidize local costs or fund the pension system beyond the minimum, regardless of changes in benefits.

The committee did unanimously kill some other changes to the pension system: HB 1204, adding

training time to the emergency exemption for retirees working part-time; and HB 1634, allowing retirees to work as much as they wanted in “part time” jobs with a penalty of 23% of their pay.

HB 1222, adding a drone user to the aviation users advisory board, passed unanimously, with a minor amendment, as did HB 1324, exempting shared housing programs from needing a real estate license. HB 1318, requiring security personnel (including Secret Service and the other-state police officers accompanying visiting governors) for political visitors to get a state security guard license, was killed unanimously, as was HB 1574, which would require the state to operate as an insurance agency for high deductible plans suitable for health savings accounts. It would be nice to be able to get such a plan, but it would take more than just asking for it. There's the federal affordable care act, all the rules developed from it, and books and books of state laws on health insurance ...

HB 1706, creating a study committee on solid waste issues from state government, is actually a good idea, since every state facility has different problems and procedures. We recommended it to pass 17-1, with me voting against because I wouldn't want to serve on that committee. HB 1528 is another study committee, this one on state employee compensation; we held it for interim study because the sponsor asked us to do so. It turns out the bureau of personnel is currently going out for bids to professional human relations companies, to do a very similar study, so the full committee is not needed.

We also continued with public hearings. HB 1485, a bill requiring video surveillance cameras in community houses and group homes, was written as requiring building code changes. The building code review board came out against that process, but the sponsors had an amendment to put it in the



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licensing requirements for such homes, which makes more sense. More appropriately, they really wanted these cameras only for group homes for developmentally disabled people, especially the most disturbed and mentally ill, in order to document violence and abuse, from and to staff and other patients. However, there's no specific category of such homes, at least for people who don't need to be in the Secure Psychiatric Unit, and continuous video monitoring raises serious concerns about privacy. The bill was sent to subcommittee, but I don't see an easy solution.

HB 1536, rewriting some of the statutes governing the board of pharmacy, ran into a serious problem with inspections. The pharmacy board is tasked with inspecting all locations that have stores of prescription drugs, but doctors, in particular, find it an imposition, and nurses are concerned that pharmacists want to take over their responsibilities in preparing and administering medications. I'm chair of the subcommittee on that bill, so I'll get to know a lot more about these topics.

HB 1709, HB 1711, and HB 1713 all came from recommendations from a study committee on child care businesses. HB 1709 forbids code enforcement officials from requiring sprinklers and commercial kitchens in child care businesses, and also requires all municipalities to allow home based child care businesses in all residential zones. Nobody worried about the kitchens, but the fire marshal and others came in to comment on sprinklers, which do become an issue for centers with more children in less accessible parts of houses (basements in particular) – and in multi-family housing. Municipal officials came to point out that a business with 17 children in care might well generate traffic and noise issues not appropriate for a residential neighborhood, and that it was a violation of local control. Definitely some

work needed on this bill!

HB 1711 sets up a study committee on the appeals process for day care violations, and several owners testified that the current process was antagonistic and did not offer them due process. HB 1713 gives the department authority to set continuing education requirements for child care workers in rules, with a maximum of 6 hours per year (it's currently 18 hours, set by rule.) This brought out a lot of early childhood educators, who talked about the need for more professional child care workers, and more education rather than less. They seemed unable to comprehend that we are considering the *minimum* education, mandated by law, for every worker in the business, and not what some parents want the caretakers and teachers of their children to do! Considering that the entry level workers need only 9 units of education, and that the median wage in the industry is \$10.79/hr, getting 18 hours of continuing education every year is a burden for many workers. And since most parents care very much that their children in care are safe, but not necessarily that toddlers and preschoolers are *taught* in day care, especially if such day care becomes too expensive to afford, I'm in support of this bill. We have a continuing crisis in maintaining affordable child care, and this will help remove some barriers.

HB 1644, nominally on information required on a marriage license, actually attempted to remove any reference to race on all government forms and vital records. The sponsors didn't appear, so we didn't learn what they intended, but the directors of public health and vital records came to say it would cripple their ability to provide outcome and discrimination data, as well as millions in federal funding. I expect a quick death for this bill.

HB 1587, requiring locksmiths to be licensed, was a request of one locksmith who wants to protect



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consumers from unscrupulous, heavily advertising “locksmiths” who come to locked homes with a power saw or drill and then charge hundreds of dollars. He was opposed by a group of locksmiths who pointed out that there is no specific training for locksmiths, most people in the business learn on the job and often from parents, and that licensing does not prevent scam artists from operating. I’m optimistic that we can defeat this bill.

We had been scheduled to meet in session Thursday, but that was postponed a week due to weather concerns.



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