



Your State House Concord, New Hampshire



January 28, 2022

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

This week, the House continued with committee work. We discussed and recommended HB 1037, the governor's duties during an emergency. I had expected us to kill it, but one member had an amendment that we passed, 13-4, and then we passed the bill, 11-6! My HB 1062, on the electrology advisory committee, was amended to eliminate the deletion of rulemaking about the "content and conduct" of the proficiency examinations: we do want rules on that topic. We then passed the bill, 18-0. HB 1123, urging increased state use of bio-fuels, was recommended to kill, 16-2, since that's already state law and the agencies are getting quotes from suppliers (actual usage is very low because prices are higher than petroleum sourced diesel.)

HB 1581, our second bill on open source software, was amended to strengthen the language in support of this type of software, and recommended to pass, 18-0. The subcommittee worked out the language with the department of information technology and the bill sponsors and supporters. HB 1590, allowing towns to opt out of the retirement system for new hires, was debated and voted to kill, 15-3. The bill supporters agreed that the scheme needed more work, especially in regard to town obligations towards the unfunded liability, but strongly felt that municipalities needed more options.

HB 1030, on alternate military experience qualifying towards licensure as an LNA, passed 18-0 as it had been a minor omission on our part last year that created the need: we talked about the other military branches, but didn't include them in

the bill. We also agreed that any military medic would be more than qualified to become a Licensed Nursing Assistant, which is our lowest skill level of licensure.

HB 1016, my bill on licensing speech language specialists from the schools as speech language pathologists, was amended completely to delete the requirement that speech language professionals get a redundant certification from the department of education to work in schools (where most of the jobs are!) This also preserved the skills and qualifications of the speech language pathologists, which is required by the interstate compact we recently joined, while preserving the jobs of the few remaining speech language specialists. It's a much better bill than my original one; the amendment and the bill passed 18-0.

We held a public hearing on CACR 30, a constitutional amendment to add the position of Inspector General, which would elect up to five people to investigate waste, fraud (especially election fraud), and abuse. The sponsor didn't appear, and the only member of the public in attendance was opposed, as it's challenging for an elected official to investigate election fraud - and the Attorney General is currently responsible for such investigations, and does them. With that testimony, we voted 17-0 to kill the amendment. I presented my HB 1288, a simple bill giving a four-year term to the unclassified positions in the department of administrative service (DAS) we created last year (an oversight on my part.) I also presented an amendment, at the request of the department, making a number of clean up changes to the statute defining DAS. There were questions about the training fund and the exact titles of some of the divisions, but no controversy over the ideas.

We heard HB 1294, requiring the commission on



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demographics to consider race and ethnicity and attempt to increase the racial and ethnic diversity in New Hampshire. The sponsor didn't show, and the one person from the public who testified was opposed to the bill. We discussed it, and found that, in addition to its dubious content, the bill attempted to amend a statute that had been deleted this summer, as part of the reorganization in HB2! The entire committee was opposed to the idea of targeting racial and ethnic minorities for any reason. We voted 17-0 to kill the bill.

HB 1314, creating a committee to oversee the management of the state veteran's homes, mentioned the open items (many of them) from the latest (2014) study committee on the home. The state veteran's advisory council is not in favor of creating a new study group or additional oversight of the home, which is strictly regulated by the federal Veterans' Administration. After the hearing, it seemed likely we would kill the bill, but one board member came back and suggested that, instead of more study, we update the statute and add some legislators to the board of managers, based on the recommendations of the earlier study. If we see such an amendment, I expect to go forward with it – but not doing another ineffective study.

Thursday was pensions, part 2. We heard HB 1587, which increases the average final compensation of police and firefighters who were in service, but not vested in the pension system, in 2011. It does this by a modification of the calculation by which overtime, etc, is included in the average, which determines the pension. This brought out a lot of firefighters, and a few police and corrections officers, to ask for this increase. No one spoke in opposition, because the entire cost of this change (\$56M) is to be funded from the state's surplus – no impact on property taxes.

HB 1557, about survivor benefit allowances, determines when a retiree (and spouse, if any) must decide how much of the pension would go to the spouse on the death of the retiree. This selection can only be changed in specific, rare circumstances – death of the spouse and a divorce settlement are the most common cases. Right now the law specifies 120 days from the date of the retirement; the problem is that the retirement system doesn't always get its paperwork done on time (including cases where the employer delays reporting final salary, sick time, etc) and it's unfair to penalize the retiree by forcing him to stick with a choice made with incomplete data. So HB 1557 changes the deadline to 120 days after receipt of the final pension calculation. This seemed so obvious, we voted to recommend it immediately.

HB 1497, optional allowances, would allow employees to make that option at any time; right now it can only be done by someone who is eligible to retire. Since some of those options result in a significantly higher benefit for the survivor of someone who dies before retiring, and many people delay in filing the forms, this allows that option be made at the employee's convenience. This was a rather confusing case, so the bill went to subcommittee to chew it over.

HB 1549 exempts police “special duty” hours from the limit on part time work by retirees. The committee is more likely to recommend reducing that number than increasing it!

I presented my HB 1563, enrolling new state employees in the deferred compensation plan and automatically increasing their contribution when they get a raise. This is considered best practice to get people to save more for retirement, and having these savings available for retirement will eliminate much of the need for a cost of living



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allowance. Unfortunately, the director of this plan was sick and unable to help explain things; the bill went to subcommittee to get a chance to talk to him.

The subcommittee on HB 1429, licensing massage establishments, spent some time discussing local options and finally agreed to look into simply allowing the board to enter establishments to inspect the licenses of the workers (all required to be licensed by current law.) I'll be making sure it's during working hours!



Carol McGuire

Representative Carol McGuire
carol@mcguire4house.com
782-4918