



Your State House Concord, New Hampshire



May 3, 2024

To my constituents in Allenstown, Dunbarton, Epsom, & Hooksett,

This week, we met in session on House bills going to a second committee. First, we heard a memorial to former Representative and later Senator Bob Clegg. SB 468, naming a road in Hudson after Clegg, passed on a voice vote. Then we passed the consent calendar of 55 non-controversial (and inexpensive!) bills, including 12 from my committee.

SB 359, raising the age of marriage to 18 with no exceptions, had two floor amendments debated: one to add an exception for emancipated minors, which failed, 169-195; the second added a clause to the definition of emancipated minor that allowed marriage. That amendment also failed, 180-185, then the bill was debated some more and passed, 192-174. I was opposed; at least some 17 year olds are mature enough to marry, and it bothered me that the proponents of this bill insisted that they were "children," even the representative who had pushed for this 5 or 6 years ago, when she was in high school... (and too young to vote!) I think our current law, which requires consent from both one's parents and a judge before a person 16 or 17 can marry, is protective enough.

SB 417, on out of home placements for children, included new criteria for determining if the non-offending parent in an abuse or neglect situation could be a fit parent for placement, which seemed to consider them as guilty until proven innocent. The bill had minimal debate as the committee amendment, which deleted some of these criteria, failed, 177-188. A motion to table also failed, 180-184, and the bill passed, 191-174.

SB 463, expanding access to court appointed counsel for children; SB 498, expanding placement options for delinquents; and SB 573, a study committee on consent and confidentiality laws applicable to adolescents and young adults, all passed on voice votes without debate.

SB 248, yet another bail reform bill, went to interim study without comment, as the House already has sent its preferred bail reform package to the Senate.

SB 316, adding a mandatory minimum sentence and expanding the asset forfeiture allowed in cases of fentanyl distributors, was not recommitted to the committee, 172-180, then debated at some length. It failed to pass, 137-229, and was killed on a voice vote. I was opposed as mandatory minimums have not proven effective, and I'm opposed to the expansion of asset forfeiture.

SB 376, setting up a planning group to design education programs for state prison inmates, was debated and passed, 192-170. SB 414, mandatory minimum sentence for distributing drugs that result in a death, was tabled, 340-24, since after SB 316 was killed nobody thought we'd pass this one. SB 415, on penalties for fentanyl possession and distributing, went to interim study without debate. SB 563, preventing sanctuary cities, was tabled, 188-177, before any debate.

SB 219, mandatory reporting of some expenses by school districts, was debated and passed, 180-179. The opposition insisted that this information is already available, and they resisted requiring school districts spotlight some important numbers (administrator salaries, average cost per pupil, and average teacher salaries.) Some districts do publish this data in a user friendly format, but many do not, or only some of it; Epsom, for example, has all the



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salaries in the annual report, but not the average cost per pupil (the data is there if you want to calculate it yourself.) At 4 pm a member asked to reconsider the vote, claiming she hadn't realized the bill applied to all schools; reconsideration passed, 185-181, and the bill did not pass this time, 182-184. It was then tabled, 184-183. For some reason, the minority leader moved at 5 pm to remove it from the table, which passed, 176-174, and the bill was killed, 178-172, and reconsideration failed, 173-177.

SB 341, requiring schools reply honestly and completely to parents' requests for information, and instituting mandatory reporting to DCYF of cases where there was information withheld due to suspected imminent harm to the child (ie, according to the opponents, in cases where a child is gay or is operating under a different gender than expected,) had the committee amendment (which clarified the reporting requirement) not pass, 179-182. The bill was then indefinitely postponed, 185-176.

SB 596, expanding the definition of special needs for preschoolers to include those "at risk for" delayed social or emotional development, would use "free" federal money to subsidize child care for these children. After some debate, it passed, 190-170.

SB 380, moving the state primary from September to June, was debated and not passed, 170-196, then killed, 190-176. It was not reconsidered, 191-175, not tabled, 175-192, then indefinitely postponed, 189-178. The September primary means we file for re-election in June, after the session is over, so it's very convenient for state representatives. Most of us don't have too intense primaries or such expensive campaigns that having only six weeks of general election campaign is not a problem. Candidates for federal office or governor, on the

other hand, usually have (well, on the Republican side anyway) bruising primaries and face the problem of fundraising and electioneering for the general election at a time when out of state donors have allocated all their money. A September primary, for these offices, is incumbent protection. The secretary of state also has problems getting overseas and military ballots out in time, especially when there's a recount. The opponents argued that an earlier primary would result in year round campaigning (!) unlike the current situation...

From my committee, SB 134, disability pensions for public safety employees who are victims of violence, and SB 487, relocating the personnel appeals board, passed on voice votes, without comment. SB 439, banning procurement from companies that boycott Israel, was likewise quietly killed.

SB 352, setting up a pilot cancer screening program for firefighters, passed without comment. SB 355, on screening newborns for CMV (cytomegalovirus) infections, had a floor amendment to simply request a test if an infant fails a hearing test, since the most common symptom of CMV in infants is deafness. This amendment was explained, debated, and passed on a voice vote, and the bill likewise.

SB 403, on the health care workforce, was a bit of an omnibus bill. First it extended the deadlines for the commission on the primary care workforce (not a problem;) allowed LNAs to qualify for medication administration after working for one year, not two (a good idea, really;) and created the position of "community health worker." That person is not actually a health care worker – she helps people in the community interact with the health care system by making appointments, providing education, and coordinating access. There are a number of these in place now, grant



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funded, but the supporters want to allow them to receive Medicaid funds! The certification created by this bill is to enable them to bill Medicaid, but our plan needs to be amended to show this as an allowable expense. The debate clarified that this is a way to spend more money on Medicaid while providing what most of us see as a nicety rather than a necessity; the bill passed, 188-178.

At this point we considered HB 1003, about name changes for felons; the Senate had added a notification to the Department of Safety, for further notification of victims of other crimes. After an explanation, we voted to concur with the change.

SB 456, adding \$300,000 to the student loan repayment program to repay loans for nurses, was debated and passed, 187-177. I was opposed because it didn't seem the program had any strings attached (say, working in New Hampshire for at least a year (five years?) after receiving a payment.)

SB 496, directing the department of health & human services to establish a climate and health protection program, was debated and killed, 186-182. HB 567, directing DHHS to report on the availability of mifepristone and misoprostol, was debated, not killed, 181-183, and passed, 184-182. This seemed silly to me since the drug companies keep track of these abortion drugs (and report.)

SB 435, combining the uniform trust code and the state unitrust code, passed without comment.

SB 63, restricting the subjects local public health officials can regulate, was debated and not passed, 181-182, then tabled on a voice vote. This is a remnant of the Covid years, when municipalities used health officers to mandate masking and shut down “non-essential” businesses, beyond the state rules.

SB 538, on local zoning procedures on housing, was debated and killed, 188-173. It had some random changes to increase the housing supply, and there was something for everyone to dislike. First, it allowed tax increment districts around new housing converted from business uses, so that the property taxes would not increase for three to five years after the redevelopment. Then it would allow zoning changes to be approved by the selectboard rather than a vote of the people. Finally, it would allow “alternatives” to providing parking spaces, which could include local buses, off-site parking, or even being located in a walkable downtown area. This sort of thing is feasible in cities, but there are so few real cities in New Hampshire that we aren't comfortable with the idea of building housing with no parking!

SB 476, borrowing \$40 million to start on a new state prison, was debated and passed, 217-144.

SB 492, on wastewater treatment, passed without comment.

SB 386, creating a committee to prepare a primer on power generation, transmission, and storage, was tabled, 348-11. SB 449, on the timeline to issue air permits, passed without debate. SB 540, requiring the department of energy to investigate energy storage, was debated before it went to interim study. SB 603, on phone number conservation, was amended on a voice vote, then debated. It passed, 257-103, with the opposition concerned about spending money (however little) to keep our area code a while longer.

SB 471, adding a third speed limit of 45 mph on rural highways, was tabled, 190-165. SB 454, increasing the real estate transfer tax revenue transfer to the affordable housing fund, was also tabled, 180-176. SB 591, adding to the YDC



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defense fund, was passed without discussion.

SB 375, restricting girls' athletics to biological girls, was not tabled, 162-195, then the committee recommendation of Interim Study was debated and passed, 200-154.



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