



New Hampshire Tax Collectors' Association

March 6, 2019

The Honorable Melanie Levesque, Chairman
Senate Committee on Election Law and Municipal Affairs
Legislative Office Building, Room 102
Concord, NH 03301

Re: SB 158, AN ACT relative to town and city membership in a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization and prohibiting recipients of municipal or county funds from using such funds for lobbying.

Dear Chairman Levesque and Committee Members:

My name is Becky Benvenuti, Revenue Administrator for the City of Portsmouth. I am here today as Chairman of the NH Tax Collectors Association's Legislative Committee and also as a member of the NH City & Town Clerks' Association Legislative Committee. Both organizations ask you to vote SB 158 ITL.

We are particularly concerned about Section 1 of this bill which would prohibit municipal officials who receive funds through municipal appropriations, from lobbying or attempting to influence legislation. Speaking on behalf of these two associations, we spend a significant time each year tracking and responding to a wide variety legislation which could directly impact our ability to carry out our many statutory duties and responsibilities and/or impact our municipalities in other ways.

Legislators are currently able to: 1) receive municipal officials' expertise and opinions about possible merits or risks of legislative proposals, 2) learn about specific relevant experiences from various sized municipalities in locations throughout the State, 3) gain institutional knowledge from the wide variety of officials serving in day-to-day operations, 4) and receive answers to specific questions and gain a greater understanding about sometimes complex municipal statutory processes and procedures.

Legislators are tasked with ensuring State laws are enacted in the best interest of our towns, cities and citizens we all serve. Prohibiting municipal officials from being able to offer testimony and share first-hand knowledge and unique information about their towns, cities, citizens and services, would severely impact this public part of our State legislative process. Legislators' tools and abilities to fully evaluate an extremely large array of proposed legislation, gain a broader understanding of potential legislative risks and/or merits, and make informed decisions would be greatly diminished by Section 1 of this bill.

Ensuring that municipal appropriations may continue to be utilized to track and address proposed legislation which could significantly impact the municipalities' very ability to effectively carry out required services to their citizens and taxpayers is an important and a valid purpose. We respectfully request that you vote SB 158 ITL.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Becky Benvenuti", is written over a white background.

Becky I. Benvenuti
Chairman, NH Tax Collectors' Association Legislative Committee
Member, NH City & Town Clerks' Association Legislative Committee