

Legislative Update (October 8, 2021)

The NH House Finance Division II held a work/exec session October 6, 2021 to discuss several items of interest to the Coalition Communities 2.0. The first, and most importantly is [HB 623](#), *relative to education funding*. The Division voted “Interim Study” unanimously (7-0) but plan to use HB 623 as vehicle to form a Joint Ad Hoc Study Committee to review school funding. The committee will consist of the seven (7) members of Finance Division II and four (4) members of House Education. House Education Chair Rep. Ladd was in attendance and agreed with recommendation.1.

This recommendation still needs to be adopted by the full Finance Committee, which is under new leadership with Rep. Weyler stepping down last week (Rep. Umberger of N. Conway now is chair). No date for a meeting has been announced, and assuming the full committee recommends it, the House will also need to approve when it meets in January. Chairwoman Umberger may hold work sessions in November/December. We will be following up to confirm. Ultimately this will be a vehicle to possible future legislation for 2023

In addition to studying school funding, the ad hoc committee will address the issue of Free and Reduced meal grants, especially to assist municipalities with high rates of students whom apply for such grants.

Other bills that were acted on by the Division:

- **HB 521**, relative to the chartered public school annual grant for leased space. **ITL 7-0**. Matter was addressed in HB 2
- **HB 594**, relative to the school building aid program. **ITL 7-0**. Matter is currently being addressed in House Education. Rep. Ladd confirmed that a subcommittee is working on this.
- **HB 613**, relative to state aid to school districts with special education pupils and relative to pooled risk management for unanticipated special education cost recovery. **ITL 7-0**. Matter has been addressed by the legislature.

The Study Committee to review authorizing governing bodies of municipalities to hold virtual meetings and to study remote access to meetings under 91-A met this week (October 4-8, 2021), in preparation for an eventual report due on or before Nov. 1. The study committee is the result of [HB 108](#), *relative to minutes and decisions in nonpublic sessions; an exemption for items falling within the attorney-client privilege or the attorney work product doctrine under the right-to-know law; and remote access to public meetings under the right-to-know law*. Members of the committee are; Rep, Wuelper (Chair), Rep. Ulery (Sponsor of HB 108), Rep. Greene, Senator Cavanaugh, and Senator Birdsell. The next scheduled meeting is next Wednesday at which time a draft report will be discussed.

During the meeting, there appeared to be agreement among committee members that governing bodies of municipalities should be allowed to hold virtual meetings but with the following stipulations; a physical location is mandatory, board members should be visible as much as possible, authentication of remote board members, public should have remote access, and meeting recessed if remote access is unavailable due to glitches with internet. One area of disagreement is the number that constitutes a physical quorum versus a remote quorum. House members support a full quorum based on number of total board members and the Senate members support a minimum of 2 members.

The Senate LSR filing period will continue for two weeks through October 27th. Several bills of interest will be acted on by either House Finance or Education over the next few weeks. In addition, Senate Education has scheduled an executive session for this coming Monday, October 18th at 10:00 am.