



CITY OF PORTSMOUTH

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Deaglan McEachern
Mayor

January 24, 2022

Chairman Bob Giuda
State House
Senate Ways and Means Committee
107 North Main Street
Concord, NH 03301

Re: The City of Portsmouth's written testimony in support of SB 441

Chairman Giuda and Members of the Senate Ways and Means Committee:

I am writing in support of SB 441, a bill that would give additional sources of revenue to municipalities through the receipt of a portion of fines collected for motor vehicle offenses. With the downshifting of costs previously paid by the State and the County to local communities, local municipal budgets have had to absorb these costs. This has increased the burden on the property tax paid by the local taxpayer. This burden is exacerbated by the Legislature's refusal to pass legislation that permits municipalities to raise additional sources of revenue to lessen the burden on the property tax. SB 441, if passed, would give municipalities an additional source of revenue which would help lessen the burden on the property tax.

Before discussing this legislation, I was unaware that none of the revenue from the fines collected for motor vehicle offenses go to the municipality that collects them. I believe many other residents of the state will be surprised to learn this fact as well. Some residents could think there would be an incentive for municipalities to write more tickets if they were to receive a portion of the motor vehicle fines collected. I believe this misperception can be overcome by education and proper local management and oversight, just as is done by the State Police, and certainly not a reason to vote SB 441 Inexpedient to Legislate.

We all want safe streets and as a City Councilor, and now Mayor, I have received numerous requests from residents for our Police Department to monitor speeding on City streets. We simply do not have the resources to respond to all of these requests. Funding received from motor vehicle violations could be used to help provide municipalities with additional resources to address these citizens' concerns.

The fiscal note to SB 441 indicates that if 20% of the fines were distributed to municipalities, the Highway Fund would be reduced by \$1 million. Although we as a City recognize the importance of the Highway Fund, the reduction of that fund by approximately \$1 million next fiscal year pales in comparison to the increase in costs borne by municipalities annually due to the state's downshifting, with last year's steep increase in retirement costs being one such example.

For the reasons set forth above, I urge this Committee to vote SB 441 Ought to Pass. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Deaglan McEachern, Mayor of City of Portsmouth

c: Portsmouth City Council
Portsmouth Legislative Delegates
Karen Conard, City Manager