

# Committee Report

**REGULAR CALENDAR**

**February 8, 2021**

**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**REPORT OF COMMITTEE**

**The Majority of the Committee on Education to which  
was referred HB 513,**

**AN ACT relative to the degree granting authority of  
Signum university and relative to the authority of the  
higher education commission. Having considered the  
same, report the same with the recommendation that  
the bill OUGHT TO PASS.**

**Rep. James Allard**

**FOR THE MAJORITY OF THE COMMITTEE**

**MAJORITY  
COMMITTEE REPORT**

Committee:	<b>Education</b>
Bill Number:	<b>HB 513</b>
Title:	<b>relative to the degree granting authority of Signum university and relative to the authority of the higher education commission.</b>
Date:	<b>February 8, 2021</b>
Consent Calendar:	<b>REGULAR</b>
Recommendation:	<b>OUGHT TO PASS</b>

**STATEMENT OF INTENT**

This bill requires approval by the higher education commission as a prerequisite to the granting of a degree by an education institution. The bill also authorizes Signum University to grant degrees in New Hampshire. Signum is a new, nonprofit, and independent university with an innovative and completely online structure. The institution currently has one credit-bearing program which is a Master's of Arts in Language and Literature and has been given a comprehensive approval by the NH Higher Education Commission comprised of university and college chancellors, presidents, and the commissioner that represent private and public post-secondary institutions. During the past ten years, the legislature has authorized four higher education institutions based upon review and approval from the Higher Education Commission. The majority supports authorizing Signum University, as the committee has been given no cause or reason to do otherwise. Signum has complied with all requests from the Commission and is worthy of granting degrees in New Hampshire.

Vote 11-8.

Rep. James Allard  
FOR THE MAJORITY

Original: House Clerk  
Cc: Committee Bill File

## REGULAR CALENDAR

Education

**HB 513**, relative to the degree granting authority of Signum university and relative to the authority of the higher education commission. **MAJORITY: OUGHT TO PASS. MINORITY: INEXPEDIENT TO LEGISLATE.**

Rep. James Allard for the **Majority** of Education. This bill requires approval by the higher education commission as a prerequisite to the granting of a degree by an education institution. The bill also authorizes Signum University to grant degrees in New Hampshire. Signum is a new, nonprofit, and independent university with an innovative and completely online structure. The institution currently has one credit-bearing program which is a Master's of Arts in Language and Literature and has been given a comprehensive approval by the NH Higher Education Commission comprised of university and college chancellors, presidents, and the commissioner that represent private and public post-secondary institutions. During the past ten years, the legislature has authorized four higher education institutions based upon review and approval from the Higher Education Commission. The majority supports authorizing Signum University, as the committee has been given no cause or reason to do otherwise. Signum has complied with all requests from the Commission and is worthy of granting degrees in New Hampshire. **Vote 11-8.**

Original: House Clerk

Cc: Committee Bill File

**REGULAR CALENDAR**

**February 10, 2021**

**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**REPORT OF COMMITTEE**

**The Minority of the Committee on Education to which  
was referred HB 513,**

**AN ACT relative to the degree granting authority of  
Signum university and relative to the authority of the  
higher education commission. Having considered the  
same, and being unable to agree with the Majority,  
report with the following resolution: RESOLVED, that it  
is INEXPEDIENT TO LEGISLATE.**

**Rep. Mel Myler**

**FOR THE MINORITY OF THE COMMITTEE**

**MINORITY  
COMMITTEE REPORT**

Committee:	<b>Education</b>
Bill Number:	<b>HB 513</b>
Title:	<b>relative to the degree granting authority of Signum university and relative to the authority of the higher education commission.</b>
Date:	<b>February 10, 2021</b>
Consent Calendar:	<b>REGULAR</b>
Recommendation:	<b>INEXPEDIENT TO LEGISLATE</b>

**STATEMENT OF INTENT**

The minority believes that Signum University should not be authorized to grant degrees. In previous testimony, the president of the university demonstrated strong opposition to US Higher Education Act Title IV federal student financial aid programs. The committee believes Signum's non-profit 501(c)(3) status is inconsistent with their objection to accept federal student financial aid. For at least these reasons, we believe that degree-granting authority should be denied.

Rep. Mel Myler  
FOR THE MINORITY

Original: House Clerk  
Cc: Committee Bill File

## REGULAR CALENDAR

Education

**HB 513**, relative to the degree granting authority of Signum university and relative to the authority of the higher education commission. **INEXPEDIENT TO LEGISLATE.**

Rep. Mel Myler for the **Minority** of Education. The minority believes that Signum University should not be authorized to grant degrees. In previous testimony, the president of the university demonstrated strong opposition to US Higher Education Act Title IV federal student financial aid programs. The committee believes Signum's non-profit 501(c)(3) status is inconsistent with their objection to accept federal student financial aid. For at least these reasons, we believe that degree-granting authority should be denied.

Original: House Clerk

Cc: Committee Bill File

# Voting Sheets



**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION**

**EXECUTIVE SESSION on HB 513**

**BILL TITLE:** relative to the degree granting authority of Signum university and relative to the authority of the higher education commission.

**DATE:** January 26, 2021

**LOB ROOM:** 201/203

**MOTIONS:** OUGHT TO PASS

Moved by Rep. Allard

Seconded by Rep. Cordelli

Vote: 11-8

**CONSENT CALENDAR: NO**

**Statement of Intent:** Refer to Committee Report

Respectfully submitted,

Rep Barbara Shaw, Clerk

STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE  
OFFICE OF THE HOUSE CLERK



1/22/2021 9:56:47 AM  
Roll Call Committee Registers  
Report

2021 SESSION

Education

Bill #: HB 513 Motion: OTP AM #: \_\_\_\_\_ Exec Session Date: 2-4-2021  
~~1-26-2021~~

<u>Members</u>	<u>YEAS</u>	<u>Nays</u>	<u>NV</u>
Ladd, Rick M. Chairman	✓		
Cordelli, Glenn Vice Chairman	✓		
Boehm, Ralph G.	✓		
Allard, James C.	✓		
Lekas, Alicia D.	✓		
Moffett, Michael	✓		
Hobson, Deborah L.	✓		
Andrus, Louise	✓		
Ford, Oliver J.	✓		
Layon, Erica J.	✓		
Soti, Julius F.	✓		
Myler, Mel		✓	
Luneau, David J.			<i>absent</i>
Shaw, Barbara E. Clerk		✓	
Cornell, Patricia		✓	
Tanner, Linda L.		✓	
Ellison, Arthur S.		✓	
Mullen, Sue M.		✓	
Ley, Douglas A.		✓	
Woodcock, Stephen L.		✓	
<b>TOTAL VOTE:</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>8</b>	

# Hearing Minutes

**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION**

**PUBLIC HEARING ON HB 513**

**BILL TITLE:** relative to the degree granting authority of Signum university and relative to the authority of the higher education commission.

**DATE:** January 26, 2021

**LOB ROOM:** 201/203                      **Time Public Hearing Called to Order:** 11:30 AM

**Time Adjourned:** 12:15 PM

**Committee Members:** Reps. Ladd, Cordelli, Shaw, Boehm, Allard, A. Lekas, Moffett, Hobson, Andrus, Ford, Layon, Soti, Myler, Luneau, Cornell, Tanner, Ellison, Mullen, Ley and Woodcock

**Bill Sponsors:**

**Rep. Allard**

**Rep. Ladd**

**Rep. Cordelli**

**Rep. A. Lekas**

**Rep. Boehm**

**TESTIMONY**

\* Use asterisk if written testimony and/or amendments are submitted.

**Rep. Allard – Sponsor**

- Open the final gate to Signum U to confer degrees
- Has been approved by the higher education commission
- First step to get authorized

**Corey Olsen – President of Signum University**

- Mission statement
- Masters in literature – 4 different concentrations
- Separate non credit degrees, club programs learn everywhere, etc.
- Endorsed by many in higher education community
- Have passed accreditation of higher education community
- Concern of correspondence from last January personally offended Rep. Luneau. Apologized. No interest to offend
- May pursue in fall – Pell grants

**Rep. Luneau – Opposed**

- Questioned the email content as a threat and rebuked by Corey Olsen. Chairman asked that this private discussion be ended

**Laurie Alden – Support**

- Graduate of Signum University
- Now employed as a college teaching in Claremont
- Praised the curriculum and exposure through the university
- Convenient and low cost open to everyone
- Granting of these degrees would place graduates in competition with other grads

**Stephen Appleby – State Agency Staff**

- Received copy of the aforementioned email - have no knowledge if email was mentioned or not
- Respectfully declined to answer if a member of Higher Education Comm. Should have had access to email
- Should criminal activity within this be pursued? Chair interfered – Not relevant to bill

- All 13 questions raised last year have been met and/or answered

Respectfully submitted,

Rep. Barbara Shaw, Clerk

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

PUBLIC HEARING on Bill # HB573  
BILL TITLE: relative to the degree granting authority of Seignin Univ.  
DATE: 1-26-2021 & relative to the authority of the higher ed comm.

ROOM: 201-203 Time Public Hearing Called to Order: 11:30 AM

Time Adjourned: 12:15 PM

(please circle if present) (all present)

**Committee Members:** Reps. Ladd, Cordelli, Shaw, Boehm, Allard, A. Lekas, Moffett, Hobson, Andrus, Ford, Layon, Soti, Myler, Luneau, Cornell, Tanner, Ellison, Mullen, Ley and Woodcock

TESTIMONY

\* Use asterisk if written testimony and/or amendments are submitted.

① Rep Allard - sponsor

- open the final gate to Seignin U. to confer degrees
- has been approved by the higher education commission
- final step to get authorized

② Corey Olsen - Pres. of Seignin Univ.

- mission statement
- masters in literature - 4 diff concentrations
- separate non credit degrees, club programs, learn everywhere, etc.
- endorsed by many in higher ed community
- have passed accreditation of higher ed comm.
- concern of correspondence from last January personally offended Rep Luneau. Apologized. No intent to offend.
- may pursue in fall - Pell grants

③ Rep. Luneau - opposed  
• questioned the email content as a threat and rebuffed by Corey Olsen. Chairman asked that this private discussion be ended

④ Laurie Alden - support  
• graduate of Sequim U.  
• now employed as a college teacher in Clatsop  
• praised the curriculum and exposure thru the university,  
• convenient and low costs, open to everyone  
• granting of these degrees would place graduates in competition with other grads.

⑤ Stephen Appleby - State Agency Staff  
• received copy of the aforementioned email - have no knowledge if email was mentioned or not  
• respectfully declined to answer if a member of Higher Ed Comm. should have had access to email  
• should criminal activity within this Univ. be pursued? ~~But~~ Chan interferred - not relevant  
• all 13 ques posed last year have been met and/or answered. <sup>to kill</sup>

Respectfully submitted,  
Rep. Barbara Shaw

## House Remote Testify

### Education Committee Testify List for Bill HB513 on 2021-01-26

Support: 4 Oppose: 1 Neutral: 2 Total to Testify: 3

<u>Name</u>	<u>Email Address</u>	<u>Phone</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Representing</u>	<u>Position</u>	<u>Testifying</u>	<u>Signed Up</u>
Olsen, Corey	corey.olsen@signumu.org	215.840.9231	A Member of the Public	Signum University	Support	Yes (0m)	1/26/2021 2:31 AM
Alden, Laurie	LFSALden@gmail.com	603.359.8426	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	Yes (0m)	1/26/2021 6:34 AM
Banfield, Ann Marie	Banfieldannmarie@gmail.com	603.714.5814	A Member of the Public	Myself	Neutral	Yes (0m)	1/26/2021 12:13 PM
Porter, Marjorie	maporter995@gmail.com	603.464.0225	An Elected Official	Hillsborough District 1	Oppose	No	1/24/2021 1:43 PM
Rathbun, Eric	ericrathbun@gmail.com	860.912.3751	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	1/25/2021 12:20 PM
Appleby, Stephen	stephen.appleby@doe.nh.gov	603.271.2408	State Agency Staff	Myself	Neutral	No	1/25/2021 12:44 PM
Ploszaj, Tom	tom.ploszaj@leg.state.nh.us	603.279.9965	An Elected Official	Myself	Support	No	1/24/2021 8:10 PM



# Testimony

Honorable Members of the House Education Committee,

My name is Ann Marie Banfield and I am writing with regard to HB 513. I am an advocate for parental rights and academic excellence in education. I listened to the testimony and wanted to draw your attention to a concern I have for any institution offering online education services.

During the testimony the representative from Signum University mentioned their course offerings for students in high school. I do not know the specific criteria the higher education commission uses to determine their approval for institutions to grant degrees, but it would have been beneficial to know:

- 1) How personal information on students is collected ?
- 2) How is this personal data shared ?
- 3) Do they have a protocol in place if there is a data breach ?
- 4) Are they following federal and state statutes on student privacy ?
- 5) Are they going beyond privacy laws to limit access to 3rd party vendors ?

Remote learning may be the new model that the technology industry is pushing right now, but it is your responsibility to make sure that you question these organizations to see if they are following current laws and, if there are any loopholes in place that have allowed for personal data to be shared without consent. That kind of information could lead you to identify gaps in our current laws.

I have reviewed privacy policies from numerous EdTech companies and have found that their policies lack the privacy most people expect.

New Hampshire legislators have made significant improvements to state law but there are still loopholes that exist. In addition, EdTech companies are being sued for violating privacy restrictions.

If you were not aware, data is gold. It's how EdTech vendors can provide "free" products and services. They simply turn around and sell the data. This happens without knowledge or consent from the individuals or parents.

I signed in as neutral on HB 513 because of these concerns. I hope in the future, because of the push to make this kind of online model part of the public school system, you will question and look closely at privacy policies. EdTech companies are looking out for their profits, please look out for our children.

Respectfully,

Ann Marie Banfield  
North Hampton, NH

Link to Signum University privacy policy:  
<https://signumuniversity.org/policy/privacy/>

**Archived:** Tuesday, April 6, 2021 9:04:26 AM  
**From:** [Ann Marie Banfield](#)  
**Sent:** Tuesday, January 26, 2021 12:55:35 PM  
**To:** [~House Education Committee](#)  
**Subject:** Testimony on HB 513  
**Importance:** Normal

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Honorable Members of the House Education Committee,

My name is Ann Marie Banfield and I am writing with regard to HB 513. I am an advocate for parental rights and academic excellence in education. I listened to the testimony and wanted to draw your attention to a concern I have for any institution offering online education services.

During the testimony the representative from Signum University mentioned their course offerings for students in high school. I do not know the specific criteria the higher education commission uses to determine their approval for institutions to grant degrees, but it would have been beneficial to know:

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Respectfully,

Ann Marie Banfield  
North Hampton, NH

Link to Signum University privacy policy: <https://signumuniversity.org/policy/privacy/>

**Archived:** Tuesday, April 6, 2021 9:04:26 AM  
**From:** Sparrow F. Alden  
**Sent:** Tuesday, January 26, 2021 7:28:53 AM  
**To:** ~House Education Committee  
**Subject:** HB 513  
**Importance:** Normal

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Hello, I have registered to share this testimony with the Education Committee this morning, January 26th, relevant to House Bill 513.

Fellow Granite Staters, Good morning.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you about House Bill 513, relative to the degree granting authority of Signum University. I am Laurie Alden, known as Sparrow, a resident of Plainfield, New Hampshire. I am an adjunct professor of English at River Valley Community College, based in Claremont: home of the famous Claremont decision, where enthusiastic, excited teachers make a world of difference in our community.

In January of 2012, I began taking courses at Signum while I raised two middle-school children, attended my mother in the last year of her life, supported my police officer wife, and performed my half-time job. I desperately needed new thoughts, new ways to keep my brain stimulated, new ways to advance myself. I have been where my students are.

Signum University exposed me to world-class professors on the edge of our field, training me in exacting habits of mind and discernment. While I studied the work of great writers from the Beowulf poet to Ursula K. LeGuin, I deepened my skills of literary research, reader response inquiry, analysis, synthesis, and above all, professional academic communication of my findings. I bring these skills to my students from Claremont, Charlestown, Keene, and Lebanon who need to inquire into history, analyze their chemistry lab findings, synthesize the learning of multiple courses into one nursing career path, and communicate clearly at their place of work.

I'm a mom from Plainfield, and because of Signum University, I got to develop cutting edge standards of digital humanities research. Other scholars use the tools which I developed and made freely accessible on the internet -- because that's how I was taught scholarship gets done.

Signum has always devoted itself to full accessibility. From the no-building, low-cost infrastructure to the global reach of the internet, Signum strives to be open to everyone with a desire to learn in this modest but active corner of academia. Rural residents of Coos County, folks with mobility impairment, and even tired sandwich-generation moms from Plainfield can challenge ourselves, better ourselves, as long as we have a public library with internet access. I myself was a work study student, preparing teaching materials for my professors to use in our online live class lectures or small group discussions.

When this pandemic hit our nation, my students did not lose one jot of educational time in my classroom because I have a decade of experience in a vital, online education program which makes the email correspondence schools of the 1990s look like the correspondence schools of the 1800s.

Through the community college, I have opened a writing center called WriterSpace at River Valley, a free place for writers of all kinds to encourage one another and get work done. WriterSpace is now virtual with writers from all over the country, and I extend you all an invitation to join me for quiet work time in a manner which combats the loneliness of safer-at-home times. Go to the River Valley Website, click on “Community and Workforce Development,” and you’ll find WriterSpace.

Signum University is a great resource for New Hampshire residents and fellow learners all over the world. The rigorous standards of online education which the State has learned to implement and assess make Signum’s approval an excellent move for the state as a whole: the high quality of Signum University’s online educational programs will be a signal to our global neighbors that an authorization from the State of New Hampshire means thorough vetting, high standards, a degree which can be held up with any other Master of Arts in Language and Literature.

Thank you,

I am pleased to answer questions here or to respond to email inquiries about Signum University.

Laurie Frances “Sparrow” Alden

297 Porter Road Plainfield, NH 03781

[LFSAlden@gmail.com](mailto:LFSAlden@gmail.com)

<https://wordsthatyouweresaying.blog/>

<http://www.birchislandbooks.com/>

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Sparrow F. Alden, CRE, MA; *she, her, hers, herself*

[Independent scholar taking a digital humanities look at Tolkien](#)

[Director of WriterSpace; poet and author.](#)

[Works available through Amazon](#)

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Fellow Granite Staters, Good morning,

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you about House Bill 513, relative to the degree granting authority of Signum University. I am Laurie Alden, known as Sparrow, a resident of Plainfield, New Hampshire. I am an adjunct professor of English at River Valley Community College, based in Claremont: home of the famous Claremont decision, where enthusiastic, excited teachers make a world of difference in our community.

In January of 2012, I began taking courses at Signum while I raised two middle-school children, attended my mother in the last year of her life, supported my police officer wife, and performed my half-time job. I desperately needed new thoughts, new ways to keep my brain stimulated, new ways to advance myself. I have been where my students are.

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Thank you,

I am pleased to answer questions here or to respond to email inquiries about Signum University.

Laurie Frances “Sparrow” Alden  
297 Porter Road, Plainfield, NH 03781  
[LFSAlden@gmail.com](mailto:LFSAlden@gmail.com)  
<https://wordsthatyouweresaying.blog/>  
<http://www.birchislandbooks.com/>

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Sparrow F. Alden, CRE, MA; *she, her, hers, herself*  
[Independent scholar taking a digital humanities look at Tolkien](#)  
[Director of WriterSpace; poet and author.](#)  
[Works available through Amazon](#)

Bill as  
Introduced

HB 513 - AS INTRODUCED

2021 SESSION

21-0788

04/06

HOUSE BILL **513**

AN ACT relative to the degree granting authority of Signum university and relative to the authority of the higher education commission.

SPONSORS: Rep. Allard, Merr. 21; Rep. Ladd, Graf. 4; Rep. Cordelli, Carr. 4; Rep. A. Lekas, Hills. 37; Rep. Boehm, Hills. 20

COMMITTEE: Education

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ANALYSIS

This bill requires approval by the higher education commission as a prerequisite to the granting of a degree by an educational institution. The bill also authorizes Signum university to grant degrees, subject to approval by the higher education commission.

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Explanation: Matter added to current law appears in ***bold italics***.  
Matter removed from current law appears ~~[in brackets and struckthrough.]~~  
Matter which is either (a) all new or (b) repealed and reenacted appears in regular type.

STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE

*In the Year of Our Lord Two Thousand Twenty One*

AN ACT                    relative to the degree granting authority of Signum university and relative to the authority of the higher education commission.

*Be it Enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court convened:*

1            1 Higher Education Corporations; Granting of Degrees. Amend RSA 292:8-h, II to read as  
2 follows:

3            II. No educational institution shall grant degrees unless ***approved by the higher***  
4 ***education commission and*** authorized by name to do so by an act of the legislature.

5            2 Signum University; Authority to Grant Degrees. Signum University is hereby granted  
6 authority to confer degrees upon its graduates subject to the authority of the higher education  
7 commission under RSA 21-N:8-a. The degrees shall be specified by the higher education commission  
8 as provided in RSA 292:8-h, III.

9            3 Effective Date. This act shall take effect upon its passage.