

# Committee Report

**REGULAR CALENDAR**

**May 20, 2021**

**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**REPORT OF COMMITTEE**

**The Committee on Education to which was referred SB  
19,**

**AN ACT relative to the degree granting authority of  
Signum university. Having considered the same, report  
the same with the following resolution: RESOLVED,  
that it is INEXPEDIENT TO LEGISLATE.**

**Rep. Rick Ladd**

**FOR THE COMMITTEE**

## **COMMITTEE REPORT**

Committee:	<b>Education</b>
Bill Number:	<b>SB 19</b>
Title:	<b>relative to the degree granting authority of Signum university.</b>
Date:	<b>May 20, 2021</b>
Consent Calendar:	<b>REGULAR</b>
Recommendation:	<b>INEXPEDIENT TO LEGISLATE</b>

### **STATEMENT OF INTENT**

The committee unanimously voted to recommend this bill Inexpedient to Legislate. This bill authorizes Signum University to grant degrees in New Hampshire; however, due to the recent passage of HB 513 in the House and Senate, which contains the same language as this bill, there is no further need for this bill.

Vote 20-0.

Rep. Rick Ladd  
FOR THE COMMITTEE

Original: House Clerk  
Cc: Committee Bill File

## REGULAR CALENDAR

Education

**SB 19**, relative to the degree granting authority of Signum university. **INEXPEDIENT TO LEGISLATE.**

Rep. Rick Ladd for Education. The committee unanimously voted to recommend this bill Inexpedient to Legislate. This bill authorizes Signum University to grant degrees in New Hampshire; however, due to the recent passage of HB 513 in the House and Senate, which contains the same language as this bill, there is no further need for this bill. **Vote 20-0.**

Original: House Clerk

Cc: Committee Bill File

# Voting Sheets

**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION**

**EXECUTIVE SESSION on SB 19**

**BILL TITLE:** relative to the degree granting authority of Signum university.

**DATE:** May 20, 2021

**LOB ROOM:** 301-303

**MOTIONS: INEXPEDIENT TO LEGISLATE**

Moved by Rep. A. Lekas

Seconded by Rep. Boehm

Vote: 20-0

**CONSENT CALENDAR: NO**

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

Respectfully submitted,

Rep Barbara Shaw, Clerk



2021 SESSION

Education

Bill #: SB19 Motion: ITL AM #: \_\_\_\_\_ Exec Session Date: 5-20-2021

<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. <i>Motter</i>	✓		
Lekas, Alicia D.	✓		
Moffett, Michael	✓		
Hobson, Deborah L.	✓		
Andrus, Louise	✓		
Ford, Oliver J.	✓		
Layon, Erica J.	✓		
Soti, Julius F.	✓		
Myler, Mel	✓		
Luneau, David J.	✓		
Shaw, Barbara E. Clerk	✓		
Cornell, Patricia	✓		
Tanner, Linda L.	✓		
Ellison, Arthur S.	✓		
Mullen, Sue M.	✓		
Ley, Douglas A. <i>Porter</i>	✓		
Woodcock, Stephen L.	✓		
<b>TOTAL VOTE:</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>0</b>	

# Hearing Minutes



**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION**

**PUBLIC HEARING ON SB 19**

**BILL TITLE:** relative to the degree granting authority of Signum university.

**DATE:** March 25, 2021

**LOB ROOM:** 301-303                      **Time Public Hearing Called to Order:** 9:10 AM

**Time Adjourned:** 9:20 AM

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

**Bill Sponsors:**

**Sen. Ward**

**Sen. Carson**

**Sen. Ricciardi**

**Sen. Hennessey**

**Sen. Kahn**

**TESTIMONY**

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

**Senator Ward – Introduced**

- Focus on language arts and literature
- Passed senate – hopes for passage

**\*Rep. Tim Horrigan – Opposed**

- Threats to members of the committee
- Questionable accountability

**\*Corey Olsen**

- Presented written testimony

Respectfully submitted,

Rep. Barbara Shaw, Clerk

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

BILL TITLE: PUBLIC HEARING on Bill # SB 19  
DATE: 3-25-2021 relative to the degree granting authority of Signum University

ROOM: 301-303

Time Public Hearing Called to Order: 9:10 AM

Time Adjourned: 9:20 AM

(please circle if 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  
*aka*

TESTIMONY

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

① Sen Ward - introduce

- focus on language arts & literature
- passed Senate - hopes for passage

② Rep Tim Norrigan - against

- \* written testimony email
- threats to members of the committee
- questionable accountability

③ Corey Olsen - here for questions only

- \* written testimony
- no questions

Respectfully submitted,  
Rep. Barbara Shaw,  
Clerk

# House Remote Testify

## Education Committee Testify List for Bill SB19 on 2021-03-25

Support: 8 Oppose: 24 Neutral: 0 Total to Testify: 3

Export to Excel

<u>Name</u>	<u>City, State</u> <u>Email Address</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Representing</u>	<u>Position</u>	<u>Testifying</u>	<u>Signed Up</u>
Horrigan, Timothy	DURHAM, NH timothyhorrigan@icloud.com	An Elected Official	Stafford 6	Oppose	Yes (2m)	3/22/2021 12:07 AM
Olsen, Corey	Hollis, NH corey.olsen@signumu.org	A Member of the Public	Signum University	Support	Yes (1m)	3/25/2021 3:08 AM
Ward, Senator Ruth	Stoddard, NH ruth.ward@leg.state.nh.us	An Elected Official	Senate District 8	Support	Yes (0m)	3/17/2021 2:31 PM
Hennessey, Erin	Concord, NH erin.hennessey@leg.state.nh.us	An Elected Official	SD1	Support	No	3/18/2021 1:44 PM
Ricciardi, Denise	Concord, NH denise.ricciardi@leg.state.nh.us	An Elected Official	SD9	Support	No	3/18/2021 1:48 PM
Southworth, Rep Thomas	Dover, NH tsouthworth@yahoo.com	An Elected Official	Myself	Oppose	No	3/18/2021 6:18 PM
Hamer, Heidi	Manchester, NH heidi.hamer@leg.state.nh.us	An Elected Official	Myself	Oppose	No	3/19/2021 6:53 PM
Carson, Sharon	Londonderry, NH deborah.chroniak@leg.state.nh.us	An Elected Official	Senate District 14	Support	No	3/19/2021 8:18 AM
Pidgeon, Dawna	Enfield, NH dawna.pidgeon@comcast.net	A Member of the Public	Myself	Oppose	No	3/20/2021 6:55 AM
Willing, Maura	Concord, NH Maura.Willing@Comcast.net	A Member of the Public	Myself	Oppose	No	3/20/2021 8:27 PM
Almy, Susan	Lebanon, NH susan.almy@comcast.net	An Elected Official	Myself	Oppose	No	3/21/2021 4:12 PM
Cannon, Gerri	Somersworth, NH gerri.cannon@gmail.com	An Elected Official	Myself	Oppose	No	3/20/2021 8:24 AM
Klein Knight, Nicole	Manchester, NH Nklein@cca.edu	An Elected Official	Myself and Ward 4	Oppose	No	3/24/2021 10:34 PM

Alden, Laurie	Plainfield, NH LFSALden@gmail.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	3/25/2021 8:47 AM
Otterson, Jonathan	Dover, NH Jto1951@yahoo.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Support	No	3/25/2021 8:52 AM
Beaulieu, Jane	Manchester, NH Jane.beaulieu@leg.state.nh.us	An Elected Official	Myself	Oppose	No	3/25/2021 9:36 AM
Booras, Hon. Efstathia	nashua, NH ebooras@gmail.com	An Elected Official	Constituents	Oppose	No	3/25/2021 12:44 PM
Smith, Suzanne	Hebron, NH zanne719@gmail.com	An Elected Official	Grafton 8	Oppose	No	3/22/2021 9:52 AM
Tucker, Katherine	Wilmot, NH katherine.s.tucker@valley.net	A Member of the Public	Myself	Oppose	No	3/20/2021 3:47 PM
Rich, Cecilia	Somersworth, NH cecilia.rich@leg.state.nh.us	An Elected Official	Myself	Oppose	No	3/20/2021 9:07 PM
Bouchard, Donald	MANCHESTER, NH donaldjbouchard@gmail.com	An Elected Official	Myself	Oppose	No	3/21/2021 1:52 PM
Dontonville, Anne	Enfield, NH adontonville@gmail.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Oppose	No	3/22/2021 8:47 AM
Schuett, Dianne	Pembroke, NH dianne.schuett@leg.state.nh.us	An Elected Official	Merr. County, Dist. 20	Oppose	No	3/22/2021 12:30 AM
Lane, Connie	Concord, NH connie.lane@leg.state.nh.us	An Elected Official	Merrimack 12	Support	No	3/22/2021 9:05 AM
Hamblet, Joan	Portsmouth, NH joan.hamblet@leg.state.nh.us	A Member of the Public	Myself	Oppose	No	3/22/2021 9:18 AM
Dontonville, Roger	Enfield, NH rdontonville@gmail.com	An Elected Official	Myself	Oppose	No	3/22/2021 9:35 AM
Bruce, Susan	Concord, NH susanb.red@mac.com	A Member of the Public	Myself	Oppose	No	3/22/2021 10:15 AM
Levesque, Cassandra	Barrington, NH cassandra.levesque@leg.state.nh.us	An Elected Official	Myself	Oppose	No	3/22/2021 10:29 AM
Harriott-Gathright, Linda	Nashua, NH linda.HarriottGathright@leg.state.nh.us	An Elected Official	Constituents	Oppose	No	3/22/2021 5:50 PM
Grassie, Chuck	Rochester, NH chuck.grassie@leg.state.nh.us	An Elected Official	Strafford 11	Oppose	No	3/23/2021 7:46 PM
Chase, Wendy	Rollinsford, NH wendy.chase@leg.state.nh.us	An Elected Official	Myself	Oppose	No	3/23/2021 11:07 AM

Altschiller, Debra

Stratham, NH  
debra.altschiller@leg.state.nh.us

An Elected Official

Stratham, Rockingham 19

Oppose No

3/23/2021 6:40 PM

# Testimony

## **Testimony Against SB 19:**

**“AN ACT relative to the degree granting authority of Signum university.”**

House Education Committee  
Rep. Timothy Horrigan; March 25, 2021

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I urge the House Education Committee to find SB 19 “Inexpedient to Legislate,” since Signum University has failed to demonstrate that its degrees are worth anything, and also because it is unclear if it is making any progress towards becoming accredited, or towards qualifying for federal student-loan programs.

Signum is a startup institution which offers all its classes online, so a traditional campus is unnecessary. But it is troubling that its address is a private mailbox at a UPS Store in a strip mall in Nashua. A university needs a more substantial physical location than a mail box to do its job. And actually, the school also uses a second private mailbox at a second UPS store in Bedford, which in my mind just makes the lack of a fixed physical location even more troubling.

There are also a few ethical issues which raise questions about Signum's trustworthiness. In particular, the school's founder and President Dr. Corey Olsen publicly threatened Democratic Rep. David Luneau, apparently because of a dispute over the content of a committee report which Rep. Luneau placed in the House Calendar in 2019.

I am also concerned over the fact that Signum has been advertising and actively offering an MA program which it is not yet authorized to offer. At a January 26, 2021 committee hearing, the university even encouraged an alumna to step forward who has used her so-called “degree” from Signum University to get a faculty position at a local community college. She flatly stated that she had an Masters degree from Signum, even though it was not authorized to offer such a degree when she studied there. I have no reason to doubt that this particular individual is a dedicated and skilled educator, but her supposed Masters of Arts degree was (to be blunt) an inadequate and unverifiable credential, which could easily have been abused.

Finally, Signum's founder, Corey Olsen, has given himself the moniker of the “Tolkien Professor” and teaches a series of courses entirely about Tolkien's works, apparently without permission of the Tolkien Estate. He doesn't need the estate's permission simply to give lectures about Tolkien, since copyright law grants a fair use exception for the purposes of academic study, but his activities do cross an admittedly blurry line.

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Rep. Timothy Horrigan; 7A Faculty Rd; Durham, NH 03824  
email: Timothy.Horrigan@leg.state.nh.us

Bill as  
Introduced



**SB 19 - AS INTRODUCED**

2021 SESSION

21-0419

04/06

SENATE BILL           **19**

AN ACT               relative to the degree granting authority of Signum university.

SPONSORS:       Sen. Ward, Dist 8; Sen. Carson, Dist 14; Sen. Ricciardi, Dist 9; Sen. Hennessey,  
Dist 1; Sen. Kahn, Dist 10

COMMITTEE:       Education

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ANALYSIS

This bill authorizes Signum University to grant degrees in New Hampshire.

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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.

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

- 1       1 Signum University; Authority to Grant Degrees. Signum University is hereby authorized to
- 2 confer degrees upon its graduates, subject to the authority of the higher education commission under
- 3 RSA 21-N:8-a. The degrees shall be specified by the higher education commission as provided in
- 4 RSA 292:8-h, III.
- 5       2 Effective Date. This act shall take effect 60 days after its passage.