

Senate Education Committee

Kat Bourque 271-3091

SB 192-FN, relative to state contributions to public school renovations.

Hearing Date: February 7, 2017

Time Opened: 9:59 a.m.

Time Closed: 10:57 a.m.

Members of the Committee Present: Senators Reagan, Ward, Watters and Kahn

Members of the Committee Absent : Senator Giuda

Bill Analysis : This bill specifies the amount of school building aid and alternative school building aid grants to be distributed in each fiscal year of the biennium ending June 30, 2019, and provides that there shall be no moratorium on school building aid for the biennium ending June 30, 2019.

Sponsors :

Sen. Kahn

Sen. Feltes

Sen. Fuller Clark

Sen. Hennessey

Sen. Watters

Rep. Cahill

Rep. Lisle

Rep. Shepardson

Rep. Horrigan

Rep. Read

Who supports the bill: Senator Fuller Clark, Wayne Woolridge (Hinsdale School District), Joseph Boggio (Hinsdale School District), Holly Kennedy (Hinsdale School District), Lisa Witte (SAU #93), Barrett Christina (NHSBA), Edward Murdough (Keene School Board), Matt Pappas (Rochester School Board), Paul Lynch, Gary Abbott (Association of General Contractors), Meredith Nadeau (New Market School District), Rep. Mullen

Who opposes the bill: No one

Who is neutral on the bill: Amy Clark (DOE)

Summary of testimony presented in support :

Senator Kahn

Prime Sponsor

- Since 1955, the state has played some role in supporting public schools for building assistance.
- The theory behind that is to balance the learning opportunities for kids who live in needy communities.
- The school building fund is another means by which the state balances needs of children throughout the state.
- RSA 198:15 provides the means for distributing funds to competing priorities. There is a mechanism for determining those that are needier and for prioritizing distribution.

- Other than emergency aid, there has been a moratorium on many projects. Each year, this mechanism has been used as the state pays down the debt as a means of balancing the state budget.
- This piece of legislation requests the committee to recognize that schools' building needs are ongoing and that minimally, there needs to be some dollars moving back into the realm where they can be allocated on a needed basis.
- Senator Kahn added that the cost of level funding in the fiscal note is \$2 million. He believes that it is important for the committee to make the statement that they believe in the funding formula and for equal opportunities in all communities.
- Senator Watters asked if the bill, while identifying additional funding, does not make any changes to the additional formula. Senator Kahn stated that this was correct.

Wayne Woolridge

Superintendent, Hinsdale

- Mr. Woolridge read written testimony that he submitted to the committee noting significant problems in the Hinsdale School District which require school building aid.
- The District strongly supports SB 192.
- Senator Reagan asked how old the building is at issue. Mr. Woolridge stated that the building is 66 years old and clarified that this is the first year that the district has applied for building aid.

Joe Boggio

Principal, Hinsdale Elementary School

- Mr. Boggio submitted written testimony.
- He stated that last year, approximately 1/3 of its teaching staff turned over, largely attributed to spacing needs.
- Adequate space does not exist because enrollment has grown in classrooms.
- Many teachers are forced to teach in spaces that are not meant to be classrooms.

Holly Kennedy

- Ms. Kennedy submitted written testimony
- She is a citizen of Hinsdale.
- She noted that Hinsdale is a tight-knit community that encourages students to have the resources they need to become successful, even though the community is not economically strong.
- Ms. Kennedy summarized that school building aid is needed in order to continue making Hinsdale the community that it is known for.
- About ten years ago, the town had a building project that included renovations at the point. The elementary school issue is a new issue that was not present ten years ago.

Edward Murdough

- Mr. Murdough submitted written testimony.
- He noted that he does not feel that the state is fulfilling its adequate education requirement in regards to buildings.

Matt Pappas

Rochester School Board

- Rochester has had to cut teachers, entire programs, professionals and more in the last thirty years in order to make the budget workable.
- Four elementary schools were built in the 1800s and three had been built in the 1960s. There have been no major renovations on these buildings.
- Air quality, space needs, and overcrowding continue to be issues in the district.
- It was recently determined that the cost of renovating one school in the district was more expensive than building an entirely new school. This was completed last year.
- The district is facing a \$2 million shortfall that needs to be addressed this year.
- School building aid is necessary in order to help Rochester.
- The legislature has pushed numerous costs down to the local level that have strained budgets.
- Rochester has been able to add some construction while deferring others.
- Mr. Pappas encourages support of this bill for Rochester and others in New Hampshire
- Senator Reagan asked what the last new project was that took place before the elementary school was built last year. Mr. Pappas stated that it would likely be the middle school build in the 1990s.

Paul Lynch

Chairman, Rochester School Board

- Mr. Lynch echoed Mr. Pappas's testimony.
- Mr. Lynch confirmed that the district's 25-year-old middle school is currently undergoing some renovations.
- Mr. Lynch added that the city's new elementary school was truly needed to meet students' needs.

Gary Abbott

Associated General Contractors of New Hampshire

- AGC of NH believes that schools are part of the economy and attract families.
- In terms of policy, Mr. Abbott noted that the committee should look at reducing the percentage of school building aid to phase in the program so that schools in the most need will have something.
- He added that another good suggestion might be a dollar cap for each school so that more schools can get receive aid.

Meredith Nadeau

New Market

- New Market has explored a variety of options in order to gain school aid.
- This year, the district is moving forward with a bond in order to move forward with necessary renovations.
- Teachers and students are experiencing a variety of issues that often not only inconvenience learning but close schools.
- New Market continues to take steps to find local efficiencies to compensate for costs passed onto the district.
- Ms. Nadeau stated that if we do not invest in our schools, the infrastructure will not be able to support the skills that are being demanded of students in New Hampshire.

Summary of testimony presented in opposition :

Neutral Information Presented:

Amy Clark

Department of Education

- Ms. Clark gave a very brief overview of school building aid with a one page summary of the loan program, including examples and the program's history.
- Senator Reagan asked what the percent the cost of construction was determined by. Ms. Clark stated that it is based on a ranking system based on a five year average. There is an example of this range being applied on Ms. Clark's handout.
- A new program, created in 2013, was created but has never been put into place because building aid was not reinstated. The major change in this program is the \$50 million cap on building aid.
- Ms. Clark noted that building aid does not cover interest.
- Now that there are districts who are seeking this money competitively, there is ranking criteria for districts based on certain issues.
- Ms. Clark also provided a list of potential school building projects for the future, most being renovation and addition projects.
- Ms. Clark also distributed draft results of a 2016 school building survey. 306 of 481 public schools responded to this survey and the overall theme is that invested building aid dollars have done a great job, although some is still needed.
- Senator Kahn asked to confirm that if the tail of the funding is followed downward, the current level of funding moving forward would show available funds. Ms. Clark stated that this was correct, as demonstrated in the table she provided.
- Senator Watters asked to confirm that there is no retro-aid, meaning that if construction has already happened during the moratorium, the district would not be eligible. Ms. Clark stated that this was correct.
- Senator Watters asked what happens if many projects rank high on the ranking criteria. Ms. Clark stated that it would be odd to have districts end up in a tie, but that

the money would be offered to districts with the most points of the criteria required.

Future Action: Pending

KAB
Date Hearing Report completed: February 8, 2017