



NH SENATE PRESS RELEASE

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Senate President Soucy Signs SB 6 and SB 14, Sends Companion Bills to Advance Children's Wellbeing to Governor Sununu

CONCORD—Today, Senate President Donna Soucy signed companion bills that will further New Hampshire's efforts to protect the safety and wellbeing of New Hampshire's children. After receiving SB 14 from the Secretary of State's office late Friday, the Senate President was joined by advocates today in her office to sign SB 14 and SB 6 together. Both passed the Senate unanimously before passing the House of Representatives and both are funded in the Senate budget.

"Together, SB 6 and SB 14 represent the biggest step forward our state has made in a generation for the wellbeing of New Hampshire's children," said **Senate President Donna Soucy (D-Manchester)**. "I am grateful for the leadership of Senator Morgan and Senator Feltes, and all the advocates, on these crucial initiatives and look forward to Governor Sununu signing these Senate bills into law so we can continue building upon the progress our state has made on child welfare reform."

Senator Jon Morgan (D-Brentwood), prime sponsor of SB 6, added: "As a father of three young children, I know there's no responsibility greater for lawmakers than to protect the safety and wellbeing of New Hampshire's most vulnerable citizens—our children. Current caseloads at DCYF and four times the national recommended average and have left the state's dedicated staff unable to do their jobs to the best of their ability. We can and must do better, and SB 6 will make it possible for New Hampshire to do better by our children by addressing the caseworker shortage at DCYF."

"It's past time to finally implement a comprehensive children's system of care to prevent the mistreatment of children and advance children's mental health, and that's exactly what SB 14 does," said **Senator Dan Feltes (D-Concord)**, prime sponsor of SB 14. "This bill cost-effective, proactive proposal that will address the critical needs of our children in a timely manner, thereby reducing significant health, special education, hospital and child protection costs down the road."

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SB 6 Background:

- The 77 positions funded in SB 6 were listed as priority needs by the Department of Health and Human Services during the agency budget requests, which can be found on page [3297/3307](#) for caseworkers and page [3299/3308](#) for supervisors.
- In January, [Joseph Ribsam, DCYF Director](#), testified in support of SB 6. Additionally in January, [Maura O'Neil, Director of the NH Office of the Child Advocate](#), testified in support of SB 6 and reiterated her support on [NHPR's The Exchange](#).
- In April, the NH [DCYF Advisory Board](#) voted unanimously to support SB 6.

SB 14 Background:

- The [DCYF Adequacy and Enhancement Assessment](#) was released on July 9, 2018.
- SB 14-FN makes improvements to the System of Care created under [RSA 135-F](#).
- The Family First Prevention Services Act – an [overview](#) from NCSL.
- New Hampshire's 10-Year Mental Health Plan can be viewed [here](#).