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Senate Health and Human Services Committee Passes First Section of Senate Democrats' Granite Promise Plan to Provide COVID-19 Relief & Recovery in NH

CONCORD - Today, the Senate Health and Human Services Committee passed Amendment #1369s to HB 1246. The amendment, sponsored by Senate Majority Leader Dan Feltes (D-Concord) and Senator Martha Fuller Clark (D-Portsmouth) is the first of three packages that make up the Granite Promise Plan, a proposal from Senate Democrats to provide relief and recovery to Granite Staters impacted by the coronavirus pandemic and increase New Hampshire's resiliency in the future.

After the committee vote, Senate Majority Leader Dan Feltes (D-Concord), Senate Health and Human Services Chair Tom Sherman (D-Rye), and Senator Martha Fuller Clark (D-Portsmouth) issued the following statements:

"Our nursing homes and long term care facilities have without a doubt been the hardest hit segments of our population during this crisis," stated **Senate Majority Leader Dan Feltes (D-Concord)**. "While we hear surface level numbers during press conferences, that does not give us the information we need to provide accurate analysis and funding to our most vulnerable population. Through an independent review and assessment of the impacts of COVID-19 in our nursing homes and long-term care facilities, we can begin to work towards a preparedness plan in the likely case of a second wave."

Senate Health and Human Services Chair Tom Sherman (D-Rye) added, "Our health care workers have been on the front lines of this crisis since day one. In forming recommendations we must keep in mind that in developing responsive policies and procedures, we are seeking to protect both our long term care residents and the staff charged with their care including proper infection control measures, testing and supplies of PPE. Working closely with the dedicated staff of the NH Department of Health and Human Services, the development and implementation of these recommendations would be funded by a Nursing Home and Long Term Care trust fund with federal money from the CAREs Act. Nearly 80% of New Hampshire's coronavirus deaths are connected to our long term care facilities. It is our responsibility to take all necessary steps and precautions so in the event of a second wave, our senior residential facilities are fully supported to meet that challenge."

Senator Martha Fuller Clark (D-Portsmouth) added, “The only thing that truly will bring our state and our country back to some semblance of normal is a vaccine for COVID-19. New Hampshire companies like Lonza Biologics in Portsmouth are hard at work developing and manufacturing the vaccine with the first batches slated to be produced as early as July. When that vaccine is developed, we need to ensure equitable access. This legislation gives our pharmacists the ability to administer a COVID-19 vaccine upon its development, much in the way they currently distribute life saving vaccines during flu season.”

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On Background:

- During the hearing, HB 1246 was amended to include text from SB 570, relative to the reimbursement of costs of training nursing assistants