

Senate Education Committee

Ava Hawkes 271-4151

HB 242, relative to the content of an adequate education.

Hearing Date: March 16, 2021

Time Opened: 9:49 a.m.

Time Closed: 10:27 a.m.

Members of the Committee Present: Senators Ward, Hennessey, Ricciardi, Kahn and Prentiss

Members of the Committee Absent : None

Bill Analysis: This bill adds specifics to the requirements of providing an opportunity for an adequate education.

Sponsors:

Rep. Ladd

Rep. Hobson

Rep. Steven Smith

Rep. Cordelli

Rep. Boehm

Rep. Umberger

Who supports the bill: Representative Rick Ladd, Representative John Potucek, Daniel Hebert

Who opposes the bill: Please refer to sign-in sheet.

Who is neutral on the bill: Patricia Yosha, Barrett Christina

Summary of testimony presented:

Representative Rick Ladd – Grafton, District 4

- Representative Ladd introduced HB 242.
- This bill adds and defines elements of opportunities for an adequate education.
- The bill, as amended, speaks to the criteria of an adequate education with regard to the opportunity to acquire and apply skills.
- There is a focus on biological, physical and earth sciences with a special focus on the geopolitical challenges we are facing.
- A lab in Hanover, NH suggested the focus on geopolitical challenges with the example of increasing ocean levels and the melting of the permafrost and polar ice caps.

- The definition of an adequate education in this bill has been modified to be rigorous with four domains in mind.
- These core domains are already in statute.
- This bill expanded the social studies terminology. Very important to have these worldly topics taught.
- The additions of wellness to curriculum around health is noteworthy as is the addition of personal financial literacy.
- These areas make up the substantive content of an adequate education.
- Computer science and digital literacy are no longer separate topics as they are connected to how we teach everything now.
- Logic and rhetoric are important skills as well.
- The completion of alternative programs are acceptable as course content for graduation which is noted in the bill.
- The cost of an adequate education is assessed as well.
- The recommendations put forth in this bill align with the legislature's 2008 and 2018 studies.
- Base cost is the cost needed for general education students.
- Base cost does not include differentiated aid.
- Students with additional needs, such as special education and English language earners, are provided differentiated aid.
- Differentiated aid for the economically disadvantaged is handled in two ways in this bill.
 - First, by looking at the equalized property evaluation per-pupil in towns to understand needs in property poor towns versus property rich towns.
 - Second, recognizing that achievement score assessments are not as high in towns with lower level equalized property evaluation, below \$1 million dollars per student. We also know that students with high property values have low proficiency levels as well.
- The legislature needs to define a base cost.
- Transportation is a part of the base cost. We fund approximately \$315 per student.
- Senator Hennessey asked Representative Ladd about any fiscal impact discussions on this bill when it was before the House.
 - Representative Ladd said, due to the timing of this bill, determining the adequacy level was difficult. There must be great thought put into adjusting the base cost.
- Senator Kahn asked Representative Ladd about the fiscal capacity disparity aid portion of the bill. Representative Ladd said the only areas that are a part of the adequacy are base costs and differentiated aid.
- Senator Kahn asked Representative Ladd about the inclusion of items that are not currently a part of an adequate education.
 - Representative Ladd said the formula in this bill replicates what we had in 2008.

- The base cost and differentiated aid must be distributed to all students regardless of wealth. However, the categorical aid is not under the same requirement which is why it can help with these disparities we're seeing.
- Senator Kahn asked Representative Ladd if these are dollar amounts that were eliminated since 2008, there should be a continuing portion of the adequacy calculation.
 - Representative Ladd said that is correct as we are walking back pre-2012 when we significantly changed how education was funded, specifically through stabilization.
 - It was later determined we should try and stay away from stabilization.
 - The formula in 2008 would have worked if funded properly.
- Senator Kahn asked Representative Ladd about the lack of stabilization grants in this bill, the lack of a path for reassessing base costs and if he has a suggested process that could compliment this legislation.
 - Representative Ladd said categorical elements in the base cost, such as transportation, aren't being funded adequately.
 - Classroom ratios is also important to take into consideration.
 - The legislature decides what an adequate education is.
 - The cost of technology has increased since 2008.

Dan Hebert – President, NH Jumpstart Coalition

- In support of this bill.
- The addition of financial literacy to this bill is the biggest driver of their support.
- We can no longer allow children to learn financial education through hard knocks.
- The landscape of how we manage our money is broader.
- NH is still the only state in New England with a state graduation requirement for economics, which includes a standard for personal finance.
- There is not a universal approach in our state in teaching personal finance.
- Their biennial study reveals a great deal about what is taught in our high schools.
- As of 2019, there were 9 school districts which required a standalone course for personal finance.
- They will be updating this study this summer and hopefully this list will grow.
- NH Jumpstart has provided financial literacy training for NH teachers.
- They have approved education standards, teachers willing to teach it and folks want to learn it with training options available.
- There has been an increased urgency in teaching money management to our children over the last six weeks.

- For example, when the GameStop story broke, students had lots of questions about short selling.
- There is also a current explosion of cryptocurrency and digital currency. Our kids need to be prepared.
- There are 20 bitcoin ATMs in our state with one located in Concord.
- Georgia legislature is looking at a similar bill which will cover cryptocurrency.

Nate Green – Bureau Administrator, NH Department of Education

- Made himself available for questions.
- Senator Kahn asked Mr. Green if the changes recommended in this bill would need to go through rulemaking. Mr. Green said yes, they would.
 - On the ground procedures and policies are spelt out pretty clearly in their standards.
 - For example, the personal finance literacy addition would need to be spelt out in greater detail to let districts know what the standards and requirements are of students.
- Senator Kahn asked Mr. Green if the lacking of a reference to a rulemaking process in the bill is an omission.
 - Mr. Green said he does not think so. RSA 193:E is the statute they frequently reference in terms of the authority they have when assessing standards for school districts.
- Senator Kahn asked Mr. Green about sections of the bill that aren't in line with, or consistent, with current state law. Senator Kahn asked if there should be more consistency.
 - Mr. Green said he can understand the desire for consistency. Some of the standards in this bill may be referenced in different sections of statute, therefore it may prove to be difficult to find all of these changes in one place.
- Senator Kahn reiterated the discrepancies when looking at base costs based on 2008 definitions and 2021 definitions.
 - Mr. Green agreed. It is likely we need to look at minimal standards as well. They have a contracted group that is reviewing minimum standards in its entirety.
- Senator Ward asked Mr. Green about confirmation on rulemaking needs. Mr. Green said he will follow-up with Diana Fenton of NHDOE.