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Contact Name: Marina Altschiller, Zack Sheehan

Phone: (603) 271-3207, (603) 271 2136

Email: marina.altschiller@leg.state.nh.us, zack.sheehan@leg.state.nh.us

Republicans Vote to Increase Property Taxes, Reduce Funding for Public Schools

CONCORD - Today, during a meeting of the Joint Legislative Fiscal Committee, House and Senate Republicans voted to accept an unsustainable federal grant intended to double the number of charter schools across New Hampshire, thereby creating a \$17 million gap in funding for the traditional public school system.

After the vote, Senate Democratic Leader Donna Soucy (D-Manchester), Senator Lou D’Allesandro (D-Manchester), and Representative Peter Leishman (D-Peterborough) issued these statements:

“Supporting our existing charter schools and their students is, and always has been, a bipartisan priority,” stated **Senate Democratic Leader Donna Soucy (D-Manchester)**. “This grant does not support existing charter school students or operations and leaves New Hampshire property tax payers responsible for filling a \$17 million gap in state funding. Our efforts should be focused on helping our existing public schools and public charter schools who have been significantly impacted by the financial and administrative burden of COVID-19, not increasing taxes for our homeowners, renters, and small businesses during a period of mass financial instability.”

Senator Lou D’Allesandro (D-Manchester) added, “The overhead costs to our school districts have only increased over the past year as they do everything in their power to reduce the spread of COVID-19 and keep our kids in the classroom. With declining enrollments across the state, it is imperative that we invest more in our existing public schools, not create more schools that will be left underfinanced. This is counterproductive in addressing declining enrollments and the failure to properly fund public education will mean a downshift of costs to property tax payers. This is a fiscally irresponsible expansion grant that could cost New Hampshire taxpayers millions and jeopardize the health and vitality of our current public schools and public charter schools.”

“This grant was initially rejected by the Fiscal Committee in December of 2019 because it would have threatened the financial stability of our traditional public schools and public charter schools. Many of our existing charter schools were struggling financially before the pandemic and are only hurting more now,” added **Representative Peter Leishman (D-Peterborough)**. “I had hoped that the Commissioner of Education would be able to request a modification of the grant to strengthen and support our existing public charter schools, not to create new ones and exacerbate the financial strains being felt on our current education system. This grant will only downshift costs to local property tax payers, something that no one can afford as we are all doing our best to keep our heads above water.”

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