



February 4, 2025

Honorable Chairman Berry
NH House Committee on Election Law
Subject: Testimony in Opposition of New Hampshire House Bill 686

Dear Honorable Chair and Committee Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. For the record, my name is Krysten Evans, and I serve as the Director of Policy for ABLE NH, a statewide disability justice organization dedicated to protecting and advancing the civil and human rights of people with disabilities in New Hampshire. I am here today to strongly oppose HB 686, which would require absentee registrants to provide copies of documentation proving their citizenship, age, domicile, and identity.

HB 686 erects unnecessary and discriminatory barriers to absentee voting by mandating that voters submit a color copy of a government-issued photo ID with their application and requiring notarization of absentee ballot applications. These provisions impose undue burdens on voters with disabilities, older adults, and others who rely on absentee voting as a fundamental means of civic participation.

Requiring voters to submit a color copy of their identification creates significant accessibility and financial barriers. Many individuals with disabilities lack reliable transportation, making it difficult to access locations where they can make color copies. The financial burden of printing or copying documents in color further compounds this issue, particularly for those on fixed incomes. Additionally, not all individuals have access to the necessary technology to scan and print a color copy at home, further disenfranchising voters who already face systemic barriers.

Mandating notarization of absentee ballot applications introduces yet another hurdle. For voters with mobility impairments, those in rural areas, and individuals in congregate care settings, accessing a notary can be a logistical and financial challenge. While some states have implemented virtual notarization, New Hampshire has not made this option widely available for absentee voting, leaving many without a feasible means to comply with this requirement. The additional burden of finding, traveling to, and in some cases paying for a notary creates an undue barrier that disproportionately impacts disabled voters.

New Hampshire has a long history of upholding the fundamental right to vote, including for those who cannot vote in person due to disability. HB 686 undermines this principle by making absentee voting, an already essential accessibility measure, excessively difficult to navigate. These requirements will have a disproportionate impact on individuals with mobility impairments who cannot easily travel to make copies or visit a notary, individuals who are blind or have low vision and may not be able to independently copy their identification, individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities who may require assistance with complex administrative tasks, and residents of congregate care settings who have limited access to external services.

These provisions are not just impractical; they are likely unlawful. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the Voting Rights Act mandate equal access to voting, and this bill creates unnecessary restrictions that violate the rights of voters with disabilities. By imposing burdensome administrative and financial requirements, HB 686 disproportionately disenfranchises disabled voters and undermines the progress New Hampshire has made in ensuring equal access to the ballot.

Rather than erecting new barriers, New Hampshire should be strengthening absentee voting accessibility to ensure that all citizens, including those with disabilities, can fully participate in our democratic process. HB 686 does the opposite, restricting access, discouraging participation, and undermining the state's commitment to an inclusive democracy.

I urge the committee to reject HB 686 and uphold New Hampshire's commitment to ensuring that every voter, regardless of disability, can exercise their fundamental right to vote.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,



Krysten Evans

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