



January 30th, 2025

Chairman Ladd
House Education Funding Committee
Subject: Testimony to HB 742

Dear Honorable Chair and Committee Members,

Chairperson and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of HB 742. My name is Louis Esposito, and I am the Executive Director of ABLE NH, an organization dedicated to ensuring that every student has the support they need to access a meaningful education. Before I was an advocate, I was a special education teacher, and I saw firsthand how funding decisions impacted not just school budgets but the daily lives of students and their families.

A Teacher's Perspective: What Funding Really Means for Students

I have worked in classrooms where students received the services they needed without hesitation, where they had stable and consistent relationships with teachers, specialists, and aides who truly understood them. I have also worked in schools where funding gaps forced impossible choices—where I saw students left without the support they needed, not because educators didn't care, but because the system did not provide the resources to meet their needs.

For my students, this didn't just mean a lack of services—it meant a constant uphill battle to be included, to be understood, and to learn alongside their peers.

- I taught students who needed one-on-one support but had to share an aide because there weren't enough staff hours to go around. These students were more likely to be excluded from activities because there simply wasn't enough support to ensure they could participate.
- I had students who relied on communication devices that took months, to be approved, leaving them without a reliable way to express themselves. They weren't given the chance to fully engage in their learning because the system prioritized cost over access.
- I saw school administrators scrambling to cover unexpected special education costs, which sometimes meant delaying or denying services, even though we all knew that early intervention and consistent support were essential for student success.

The way special education is funded determines whether students are given an equal chance to learn or whether they are pushed to the margins of their own schools.

HB 742 Fixes a Broken System

Right now, when special education costs exceed what a district can reasonably cover, state funding is often prorated, meaning districts only receive a fraction of what they qualify for. The impact of this shortfall is felt most by students, teachers, and families—those who have the least control over the funding process but the most at stake.

HB 742 ensures that special education costs are fully funded from the Education Trust Fund, eliminating proration and guaranteeing that schools receive the support they need. This is not just an administrative fix—it is a necessary step toward ensuring that students get the education they are legally entitled to without delay, without reduction, and without excuse.

This bill is important because it:

- Provides financial stability for school districts, allowing them to plan and allocate resources effectively.
- Ensures students receive services based on their needs, not on what the district can afford at the moment.
- Reduces the burden on local school budgets, preventing cuts to other essential programs that benefit all students.

Why This Matters

For too long, special education funding has been framed as a burden on school budgets rather than as an essential investment in students. The reality is that the current system forces schools to decide who gets full support and who doesn't—a decision that should never have to be made.

- When we fail to fully fund special education, we are effectively saying that some students matter more than others.
- When we force schools to stretch limited resources, we create an environment where students must “prove” their worthiness for services.
- When we prorate funding, we normalize the idea that some students will simply go without.

These are not just financial decisions. These are decisions about whether or not a child has access to their education.

Conclusion

I urge you to support HB 742, not just because it corrects a funding gap, but because it affirms our state's commitment to ensuring that every student has an equal opportunity to learn, grow, and succeed.

When I was a teacher, I saw how much my students had to fight just to have what their peers took for granted. It should never be a fight. HB 742 ensures that students receive the services they need—not as an afterthought, not as a financial trade-off, but as a fundamental part of their right to an education.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



Louis Esposito
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