

February 8, 2017

Honorable Stephen Schmidt, Chairman
House Labor, Industrial and Rehabilitative Services Committee
Legislation Office Building, Room #307
107 North Main Street
Concord NH 03301

Re: Testimony In Opposition to Senate Bill 11 and House Bill 520

Dear Honorable Chairman Schmidt and Members of the Committee,

Due to work obligations, I am unable to attend the hearing on Senate Bill 11 and House Bill 520. However, I would like my letter entered into the record.

I am a fourteen year teaching veteran at Timberlane Regional High School. I have proudly served my teachers' union as a building representative, Vice President, and, currently, as President of the Timberlane Teachers Association, AFT #4796. I am proud to say that this union of professionals has worked tirelessly to improve working conditions and quality of life for our members. Our union is also an open shop: we do not charge an agency fee. This means that the hard work that our paying members provide benefit all professional employees in the Timberlane Regional School District. It is only because of the selfless efforts of the Timberlane Teachers Association that we have been able to provide a contract that respects the professionalism and work of our teachers as they prepare the next generation of civil servants, entrepreneurs, and leaders. The value of this important work is reflected in the contract that they work under. So-called "Right-to-Work" legislation, like SB 11 and HB 520, severely undermine the respect shown to these professionals and the work they are charged with doing.

Legislation, like SB 11 and HB 520, does not improve quality of life for employees and their families. It does not show the respect or value we, as a society, should be presenting these professionals with. Instead, it inserts the government into the private negotiations between the employee representatives and their employer. It is, at its heart, big government. It undermines trust that is built by years of cooperation and negotiation between employee unions and employers and results in poor-quality contracts for employees, if any contract at all.


So-called "Right-to-Work" legislation also hurts families and local economies. As we have seen made abundantly clear in states that have shortsightedly enacted such legislation, like Indiana, RtW laws result in lower pay for employees, by about 17%, fewer benefits, and a lower quality of life for citizens. Employment rates are not aided by RtW laws, as seen in Indiana, and poverty rates go up (RtW states have about 4-5% higher percentage of citizens living below the poverty line). When employee purchasing power is reduced or hampered by such conditions, it ultimately feeds into the local economy, resulting in depressed local markets and, eventually, a labor shortage, as RtW laws have never resulted in an influx of business to a state and as workers seek better conditions in states that respect and value them.

Finally, legislation like SB-11 and HB-520 are unnecessary in states like New Hampshire. Since the Taft-Hartley Act of 1947 and state-level legislation, no employee is forced to join a union in New Hampshire. Membership is voluntary, already. Thus, the only reason for legislation like SB-11 and HB-520 is to undermine the good work of unions and erode away the hard fought improvements in quality of life achieved only because of the work of unions in America.

I ask that you vote Inexpedient to Legislate on Senate Bill 11 and House Bill 520 so we can move forward with a positive agenda for NH. If you would like to discuss this further, please feel free to contact me.

Thank you.

Sincerely,


Ryan Neal Kichman
President, Timberlane Teachers Association, AFT 4796
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