

THE HILLSBORO-DEERING FEDERATION OF TEACHERS
AFT#2348, AFT-NH, AFL-CIO

A. Luhtjarv - President
K. Channon - V. President



S. Martin – Treasurer
G. McLay – Secretary

“Serving those who serve our students.”

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,

I am writing to you today urging you to vote no on SB 11 and HB 520. I am a Republican resident, but also the President of a local teachers' union in Hillsboro, NH. I firmly believe right to work bills are shortsighted. We are an agency shop union, but our union currently has 100% participation among the teachers of our district. All of our teachers have benefited from the services provided by their local union. We use dues to help support that local work in advocacy of member interests and through collective bargaining. We also use dues to contribute to local charities and organizations, such as the food pantry and local youth athletic association. Right to work would undermine our ability to continue to be a positive presence in our community and would likely result in lower wages for employees and lower quality health care. While many argue that Right to Work creates a business-friendly climate in NH, the wage and benefits cuts we would ultimately face without collective strength would actually result in decreased consumer spending by our member families.

Currently, only 10.7% of NH employed workers were union members in 2016 according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. I do not see how 10.7% of workers choosing to join a union is seriously harming the business climate in NH, especially since roughly half of these union members are public sector employees. I feel that a far greater threat to our financial health as a state is posed by anti-union corporations, such as Walmart who offer wages barely above a living wage in exchange for 40 hours of their lives each week. Agency fee provisions in contracts are MUTUALLY negotiated by labor AND management. In regards to public sector contracts, they are democratically voted on by both sides, before being presented to voters who once again have a choice to approve or deny the provision. This legislation wipes out those three democratic processes.

Many feel that my Republican party affiliation and status as a labor leader are contradictory. I do not - I feel the Republican party AND labor unions protect the value of hard work. I was taught that the key to lifelong success was giving it 110% in school and at

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work. As a teacher, I pass on those values. However, in my 17 years as an educator, I have been a witness to many situations where quality teachers have been subjected to unfair decisions in which the union was their only defender. There is value in that service to defend hard work. I have also been a part of three different negotiating teams and each time, we worked together with the district to negotiate fiscally responsible contracts with fair pay and benefits while trying to mitigate the burden on taxpayers. There is value in that service to reward families of workers who have dedicated their careers to helping their students become productive members of the community. I hope that as a fellow Republican, you will read this letter, and 1. Consider voting against both bills, but 2. Realize that the stereotypes that exist about unions in 2017 are just not accurate.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Richard Luhtjarv
Rindge, NH Resident
Hillsboro, NH Educator