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Members of the House Education Committee:

I thank you for your leadership and work in the review and study of SB 193 which establishes education freedom savings accounts for students. In plain language, it is an act that establishes an educational voucher system in the New Hampshire. As the superintendent of the Dover School District SAU 11, I believe it is my professional and ethical responsibility to oppose SB 193.

For decades, families have had the option of school choice, electing to send their children to private or parochial institutions and most recently other options including charter schools and homeschooling. These are choices that parents make. Creating a voucher system funds choice at the expense of the public schools. There is no sound rational or evidence to support the creation of a voucher system.

Public schools have a philosophical mission to develop highly educated citizens who are essential to sustaining a democratic society. The passing of SB 193 will promote the privatization of education as well as increase the potential erosion of the philosophical purpose of public education. As stated by Honorable State Representative Wayne Burton, "Individual choice trumps the greater good of our communities." I believe state legislators have the ethical and moral responsibility to look out for the welfare of the greater community. Public education is a foundational pillar that strengthens the welfare of the community.

Furthermore, school choice should not be a detriment to the public schools. The continuation of removing students and families from the public-school system is harmful to the vitality of the public school system, and continues to reduce public school funding. This bill has the strong possibility of creating an inequitable education system in New Hampshire. The bill is at the expense of students who do not have the financial ability to attend private schools or who have specialized needs that may not be addressed in private schools and adds to the financial class divide. The strength of public schools is in their diversity. It is a strong possibility, whether an unintended consequence or not, that this bill moves public funds from students of low socio-economic status to students of higher socio-economic status.

Dover School District Mission Statement

Strengthening our community by educating every child, every day!

In reviewing SB 193, unlike public schools, there is no language that holds any education provider to performance standards or to any form of accountability. With the implementation of SB 193, a citizen's tax dollars can potentially be invested in educational institutions with no accountability. I believe state legislators have an ethical responsibility to use public tax dollars in a responsible and accountable manner.

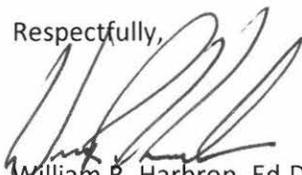
In *Legiscan*, it was indicated the Department of Education is "unable to estimate how many eligible students would participate in this program and therefore is unable to estimate this bill's impact on state education trust expenditures or local revenues." School districts were provided information indicating funding loss from 1% to 5% participation in the voucher program. For the Dover School District, the loss of funding ranges from \$142,824 to \$714,122.

Annually, the Dover School Board presents a budget to the City of Dover for consideration and funding. Public schools provide programs and services that are purposefully designed and implemented to meet the needs of all learners. Each fiscal year is plagued with identifying and providing the essential funds to provide adequate programs and services to meet the many educational needs of all students. As funds for public schools diminish, it directly impacts the programs and services that are afforded to students to advance their learning and achievement.

Without knowing the potential financial implications for public schools with the enactment of SB 193, it would be irresponsible to move forward with this legislation. The State of New Hampshire continues to struggle with the ability to provide the essential resources to adequately fund public education, yet the passage and funding of SB 193 makes funding a scholarship fund/voucher system a higher priority than properly and adequately funding public schools. I do not find that funding a voucher program is a wise and prudent use of limited tax dollars. SB 193 will further exacerbate the funding of public schools.

I believe in public education and what public education can accomplish for the future citizens of our state and country and because of this, I oppose SB 193. It is not sound legislation and will not serve well the general welfare of the citizens of New Hampshire. I strongly encourage the House Education Committee to oppose SB 193. It is time to take a stand for public education system that can safe guard our liberty and prepare all our children and youth for their participation in a democratic society.

Respectfully,



William R. Harbron, Ed.D.
Superintendent

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