



CITY OF MANCHESTER

Joyce Craig
Mayor

February 22, 2019

NH State Board of Education
c/o NH Department of Education
101 Pleasant Street
Concord, NH 03301

RE: Learn Everywhere

Dear Chairman Cline and Members of the Board,

At the February 14th public hearing on the proposed “Learn Everywhere” program, it was misrepresented to your Board and members of the public that the Manchester School District was in favor of the program based on a letter from our outgoing Superintendent Dr. Vargas. As Mayor and Chair of the Manchester Board of School Committee, I can assure you that the Manchester Board of School Committee has not taken a position on this program, nor has it authorized Dr. Vargas to support this proposal on behalf of the district.

I write to you not on the behalf of the Manchester Board of School Committee or the City of Manchester, but as a Mayor who deeply cares about the quality of education our children receive from our schools.

The “Learn Everywhere” program, as currently proposed, runs counter to the established policies of the Manchester Board of School Committee and I urge the Board of Education to reject this proposal.

Encouraging learning outside the classroom and providing innovative learning opportunities is critical to meeting the needs of our students with different talents and development. That is why Manchester has authorized Extended Learning Opportunities (ELOs) in our district to improve student achievement when the traditional classroom structure is not practical or effective for an individual student. However, as detailed in the Manchester Board of School Committee’s Instruction Policy 131.2, all such ELOs “must be aligned with the school’s educational goals and objectives.”

The "Learn Everywhere" program would give the State Board of Education the ability to force Manchester to grant academic credit for programs that are either not aligned with our district's goals or not up to the rigorous standards we set for our students. Decisions like this should not be made in a boardroom in Concord, but by the Manchester Board of School Committee, who are elected by the people of Manchester every two years and who care the most about the quality of education in Manchester schools.

In Manchester and school districts across the state, local control is the bedrock on which our public education is based. What works in a rural town in Coos County may not work in Manchester, which is why local control and local decision-making is so important. If the "Learn Everywhere" program is approved, it will usurp our local school boards' ability to decide what is best for our students as well as potentially weaken the standards our students and educators are held to.

Therefore, I respectfully ask the Board of Education to reject the "Learn Everywhere" program proposal. However, if the Board intends on approving the program, I strongly urge the Board to amend the proposal to allow each local school district to determine whether or not to grant credits earned in the "Learn Everywhere" program so that each school district can maintain the local control that our residents, teachers, and students expect from their elected officials.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter and if you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Joyce Craig".

Joyce Craig
Mayor