



**League of Women Voters
New Hampshire**

LWVNH.org

January 26, 2016

To: Senate Finance Committee

Re: **SB 464** relative to drug courts grant

The League of Women Voters New Hampshire supports the establishment of drug courts throughout the state and urges the committee to approve funding grants to counties and state entities to support and to establish drug courts.

Our position stems from the three-year study LWVNH conducted of the impact of incarceration of women in NH, the impact not only on the offenders and their children but also on the state and the taxpayers. We conducted this study from 2009 to 2012, and we have continued to update our findings and our involvement. I currently serve on the Citizens Advisory Board to the NH Correctional Facility for Women, where many of the inmates are incarcerated because of substance abuse related crimes.

In our study, in 2011 I believe, the League's study committee members were granted extraordinary behind-the-scenes access to the Grafton county drug court. We also attended two graduation ceremonies and were moved by the comments of those who completed the program and their families, finding successful paths for themselves. Since then some changes to the program have resulted in improved completion rates for women offenders, which makes us very happy.

The fiscal note attached to this bill explains some of the expenses that will be incurred by the state and counties, but it does not point out the offset in reduced incarceration costs. No one can cite those numbers with certainty, and the costs of county and state incarceration vary. It seems logical, however, that reducing incarceration costs will effect savings that more than make up for drug court grants.

The League believes that saving money at the state and county levels when drug courts reduce incarceration will pay off for taxpayers. But perhaps even more important is the saving of lives by investing in programs to turn drug abusers into wage-earning stable members of their communities.

Sincerely,

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