

SUPPORT FOR SB 432 AND H 1683 – January 30, 2022

To: Members of the Senate and House Education Committees

From: Janet Ward, Vice President, League of Women Voters of New Hampshire

Re: The League's support of SB 432 and HB 1683

Dear Senators and Representatives:

The League of Women Voters of New Hampshire asks that you support SB 432 (An act repealing the education freedom account program) and HB 1683 (An act repealing the education freedom account program). The reasons for our request are detailed below.

In 2017 the League of Women Voters of New Hampshire reached consensus regarding the League's continued support of public education. In preparation for our consensus discussions, the League researched THE HISTORY OF PUBLIC EDUCATION IN THE UNITED STATES AND IN NEW HAMPSHIRE. Our concise, four-page report is available on our website (<http://lwvnh.org/studies/> See History of Education Fact Sheet.). Our report includes Thomas Jefferson's reasons to support public education and his fear for its survival:

[Jefferson] believed that such civic education would equip citizens with the knowledge they would need to be able to protect their new nation against challenges that would destroy it, primarily 'factions,' individuals or groups interested in selfish purposes and not the common good.

New Hampshire's school vouchers are the embodiment of Jefferson's fears. Rather than support a means to build community and shared responsibility in our nation and in our towns, well-funded and determined "factions" have lobbied to create school vouchers to privatize education and to finance the creation of separate, private educational "silos."

School vouchers were overwhelmingly rejected by voters when citizens were allowed to submit their testimony during online hearings, so voucher supporters arranged to have the voucher bill secreted in a budget reconciliation bill rather than have it submitted for open legislative debate.

School vouchers require that public tax dollars be used to support a program overseen by a virtually unregulated private entity. Moreover, there is very little public oversight of the private or religious schools or homeschooling paid for by our public tax dollars.

Public schools are open to students, parents, and taxpayers so that the public can see how their tax dollars are being used and can participate in decisions regarding the education of our young people. Once public tax dollars (now estimated at \$8 million just for the first year) are paid to support private educational settings, taxpayers are not invited to participate in the educational practices in those settings. School vouchers unfairly force New Hampshire's taxpayers to pay for educational products about which they know very little. The recipients of monies from the

Education Freedom Account program have virtually no accountability as to how our public tax dollars are spent. This is clearly a case of “taxation without representation.”

Moreover, public schools in New Hampshire are not failing. They represent critical centers of civic education and community. Thomas Jefferson’s understanding of public education as an essential foundation of our democratic republic remains true to this day. **PLEASE RECOMMEND OUGHT TO PASS ON SB 432 AND HB 1683.**