

[this testimony was presented on Jan. 16, 2025, to the House Education Funding Committee by League board member Janet Ward.]

**HB 115 IS AN EXPANSION OF NH'S SCHOOL VOUCHER PROGRAM AND OF
TAXATION WITHOUT REPRESENTATION**

My name is Janet Ward. I am the vice president of the League of Women Voters New Hampshire, a non-partisan organization. Thank you for the opportunity to come before you.

In 2017, the newly appointed Commissioner of Education Frank Edelblut was invited to address the annual meeting of NH's League of Women Voters. During the question and answer period following his talk, I asked the Commissioner, "What do you see as the role of public schools in our democracy?" Commissioner Edelblut said many things, but he did not answer that question. At the close of an hour-long conversation in December 2019, the Commissioner told me that he believed that "public dollars should pay for private education" and that I did not believe this. He was correct.

I believe what Thomas Jefferson and other Founding Fathers believed, that participation in a democracy, a form of government which respects the divergent views of its citizens, requires an educated populace. This is why public schools were established.

All of us present here today recognize that NH's school voucher program takes tax dollars from taxpayers like me and requires that I give these dollars to parents or guardians to pay for the private, religious, or homeschooling of their children. Applicants for NH vouchers apply to a private organization, The Children's Scholarship Fund, which screens applicants and presumably ensures that all monies are properly spent.

The NH Legislative Budget Assistant (or LBA) is required by statute to do a performance audit of NH's school voucher program, but the LBA is unable to do this because it has not been given access to this information.

Once school vouchers consisting of NH taxpayer dollars are awarded, taxpayers do not have any appreciable oversight on how their tax dollars are spent. Unlike taxes provided to our local public schools, the money taken from us as voucher dollars, disappears from taxpayer oversight. This constitutes TAXATION WITHOUT REPRESENTATION, one of the key reasons why the original thirteen colonies revolted against Great Britain.

I believe a citizens' revolt against school vouchers should and eventually will happen.

Thank you.

Janet Ward, Hopkinton, NH