



STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

CHRISTOPHER T. SUNUNU
Governor

January 23, 2020

Judiciary Committee
New Hampshire State Senate
Concord, NH 03301

Dear Chairwoman Hennessey and Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee,

I write today in support of Senate Bills 572 and 468.

A major focus of my administration has been ensuring that children are free from abuse. Like all parents in our state, I was extremely concerned to learn of the recent alleged incidents in the Concord School District involving the sexual abuse of students by a teacher.

It was further troubling to learn that an incident between the teacher and student who attended Concord High School went unreported to law enforcement because our state law does not expressly prohibit it because the student had reached the legal age of consent. I hope we can all agree that it is never appropriate for a teacher to engage in any sort of romantic or sexual relationship with a student in a primary or secondary educational institution, and that this behavior should always be reported to the Board of Education and local law enforcement. Our laws must be changed to address this loophole.

I urge this Committee, followed by the full Senate and the House of Representatives, to find the most comprehensive language to close this loophole in our law, and to ensure that sexual contact by an actor who is in a position of authority over a teen is expressly criminalized - whether or not the actor or the teen claims that the act was consensual. By the very nature of a person's position of authority over a child, any sexual act against that child is coercive in nature. No child is freely able to give consent in cases where a person has authority or control over them.

Every child deserves to go to school, be on the playing field, attend summer camp, and visit a place of worship without being subject to predatory behavior by those who are supposed to be teaching or caring for them. I look forward to signing into law a bill that provides greater protection for children, and that sends a strong message to predators that their abuse will not be tolerated.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Christopher T. Sununu".

Christopher T. Sununu
Governor