

May 14, 2025

The Honorable James Gray, Chairman
Committee on Finance
New Hampshire State Senate
State House, Room 103
Concord, NH 03301



Dear Chairman Gray and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for accepting this written testimony from the New Hampshire Land Trust Coalition (NHLTC). NHLTC is the statewide association of private, nonprofit organizations working to conserve open land in our state. We seek to advance land conservation in New Hampshire through professional development, policy advocacy, and education. We also work to strengthen the voice of land trusts in the legislature and public agencies on issues of direct interest to land conservation.

It is in this latter capacity that we submit testimony regarding the proposed New Hampshire State Budget for Fiscal Years 2026 and 2027. We urge the Committee to accept the request from the University System of New Hampshire to maintain general funds at the Governor's recommended levels. Among the many benefits the state's investment in UNH provides, it funds educational and technical assistance programs through UNH Cooperative Extension that generate economic and ecological benefits on private lands throughout our state. The professional staff of foresters and wildlife biologists meet with landowners to provide forest management guidance and encourage long-term stewardship of natural resources. In addition to working one-on-one with landowners, UNH Cooperative Extension staff continues to be a key partner with land trusts and the NHLTC on outreach and education programs. The assistance they provide us is invaluable.

We also ask that the Senate reverse several funding cuts the House-passed version of HB 1 and HB 2 that would negatively impact state agencies whose missions relate to the protection and stewardship of New Hampshire's natural resources. These include:

- The \$6 million back of the budget cut to the Department of Environmental Services.
- The elimination of general funds in the amount of approximately \$2.4 million for conservation law enforcement to the Department of Fish and Game.
- The \$600,000 back of the budget cut to the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources.

We ask the Finance Committee to consider providing an exemption for the Fish and Game Department to the proposed administrative charges to dedicated funds for Fiscal Years 2026 and 2027 as included in HB 2. Similarly, we support the request from the Department of Environmental Services for an exception to the assessment on dedicated fees on DES-administered funds.

Thank you for considering this testimony and please don't hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Anne McBride
Board Chair, New Hampshire Land Trust Coalition