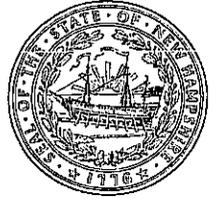




The State of New Hampshire
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES



Thomas S. Burack, Commissioner

January 12, 2010

The Honorable Emma Rous, Chairman
N.H. House of Representatives
Education Committee
Legislative Office Building, Room 207
Concord, New Hampshire 03301

Re: HB 1289 – An act relative to air quality in public schools

Dear Chairman Rous and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on behalf of the Department of Environmental Services (DES) in support of HB 1289, which seeks to require all NH public schools to conduct an annual indoor environmental self-inspection using a standardized checklist and providing the results of this inspection to the Department of Education, the local school board, and the local health officer. DES understands that a healthy indoor environment is crucial for maintaining proper indoor air quality and optimum learning conditions in our schools, and we work diligently through our Environmental Health Program to assist school districts in developing and maintaining healthy indoor environments.

In New Hampshire, over 200,000 students and 20,000 teachers and staff (1 out of 6 residents) spend most of their day in school. In fact, more people spend more time in schools than any other type of building except the home. In addition, occupant density in schools is higher than in any other type of building (including prisons and workplaces), increasing the likelihood of problems related to disease transmission, indoor air quality, ventilation, and building maintenance. While most school administrators are quite aware of these problems, they are often not adequately addressed due to limited resources, competing priorities, and lack of applicable policies and standards that address indoor environmental conditions. Yet research and experience show that healthy indoor environments can not only have a significant positive impact on children's health and learning ability, but can also save time and money by minimizing energy use, maintenance costs, crisis intervention, and absenteeism.

DES views the required actions in this bill as an opportunity to prevent poor indoor environmental conditions and deferred maintenance from developing into larger problems that can adversely affect indoor air quality and student learning in New Hampshire schools, and we fully support enactment of this legislation.

Thank you again for the opportunity to offer our support for HB 1289. Please contact Richard G. Rumba, Administrator of the Environmental Health Section, at 271-1987 if you have any questions or would like further information.

Sincerely,

Thomas S. Burack
Commissioner

cc: Rep. C. Beck
Rep. Y. Thomas
Senator M. Hassan
Senator M. Fuller Clark
Senator M. Kelly