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POLICY + ADVOCACY CONFERENCE

SPEAKING UP FOR WHAT MATTERS



From Idea to Law

Drafting legislation in New Hampshire with community voice, legislative champions and the budget in mind

"So You Want to Write A Bill" Session | November 19, 2027 | [Rebecca Woitkowski & Jake Berry]

THE BIG IDEA

A strong bill is built, not just written



1. Community voice

Start with the people most affected and keep them in the loop



2. Technical drafting

Turn the solution into clear, workable statutory language



3. Legislative champions

Build understanding and ownership with sponsors early



4. Field & budget alignment

Move with partners and plan for the money

Then we put it all together in the Bill Builders activity

Start with the problem, not the solution

Ask first

- Who is affected, and what are they experiencing?
- What do they say would help?
- What has already been tried, here and in other states?
- What do the data show?
- Is a law the right tool, or is it rules, funding or practice?

Ways to listen



Listening sessions and surveys



People with lived experience on the design team

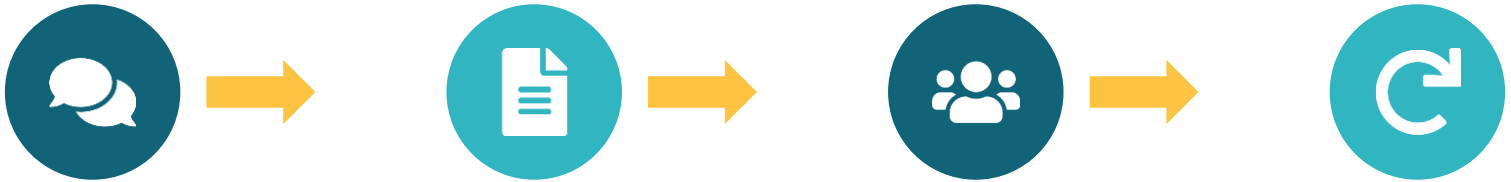


Providers and partners who see the gaps daily



State data, studies and other states’ laws

Build a community feedback loop



Listen

Hear the problem in people's own words

Share a plain-language concept

One page, no legalese

Test it

With the people affected, providers and partners

Revise and report back

Show people how their input changed the bill

Ask permission before sharing anyone's story, and let them decide how it is told.

How a bill moves in New Hampshire

1 LSR filed

Legislator files a request with OLS in the fall; title only

2 OLS drafts

Nonpartisan attorneys write the text

3 Sponsor signs off

Bill numbered HB or SB

4 Public hearing

Every bill gets one

5 Executive session

Committee votes OTP, OTP-A, ITL and more

6 Floor vote

Fiscal bills may go to a second committee

7 Crossover

Late March or early April

8 Other chamber

Repeat; conference if they disagree

9 Governor

Signs, lets it become law, or vetoes

Anatomy of a New Hampshire bill

SB ____-FN – AS INTRODUCED
AN ACT relative to health insurance coverage of perinatal doula services.

ANALYSIS This bill requires group health insurance policies to cover doula services…

1 New Section. Amend RSA 417-D by inserting after section 2-f:
417-D:2-g Coverage of Perinatal Doula Services. I. Each health carrier that issues or renews any group policy…

2 Effective Date. This act shall take effect January 1, 2028.

1. **FN / FN-A** Has a fiscal note; FN-A also makes an appropriation
2. **Title** "AN ACT relative to…" sets the scope
3. **Analysis** Plain-language summary for readers
4. **RSA section** Where the law lives in the statutes
5. **Bold italics** New language; [brackets] mark deletions
6. **Effective date** When it starts; plan for implementation

Drafting tips advocates can bring to the table

Find the right home

Locate the RSA chapter where your policy fits

Borrow what already passed

Our doula bill mirrors the home visiting language in RSA 417-D:2-f

Define your terms

Who qualifies? What is covered? Who is responsible?

Be realistic on timing

Leave time for agencies, insurers and rulemaking

Spot federal limits early

ACA coverage rules, Medicaid financing, ERISA

Bracket the choices

Leave [numbers] and options for the sponsor to decide

OLS writes the final text. Your model language and research make their job, and your sponsor's, easier.

A citizen legislature needs partners

400	24	$100	0
House members	State senators	Yearly pay, plus travel	Personal staff



What it means for advocates: you and the people you work with are often a legislator's research team, story source and sounding board.

Cultivate champions before and during drafting

- Recruit a prime sponsor and bipartisan cosponsors
- Brief them with a one-pager and real stories
- Meet early, before the fall LSR deadline
- Stay close through OLS drafting and answer questions fast
- Anticipate the fiscal note and the cost questions
- Line up testimony and witnesses for the hearing

CASE STUDY

Momnibus 2.0 (SB 246, 2025)

- Led by Sen. Denise Ricciardi (R-Bedford) and Sen. Sue Prentiss (D-Lebanon)
- Passed the Senate 24-0
- Signed into law by Gov. Ayotte as part of the budget

Move with the larger advocacy field

Map the field

Who else works on this issue, and what are they pushing?

Avoid competing bills

One strong bill beats three similar ones

Agree on shared asks

Common message, common priorities

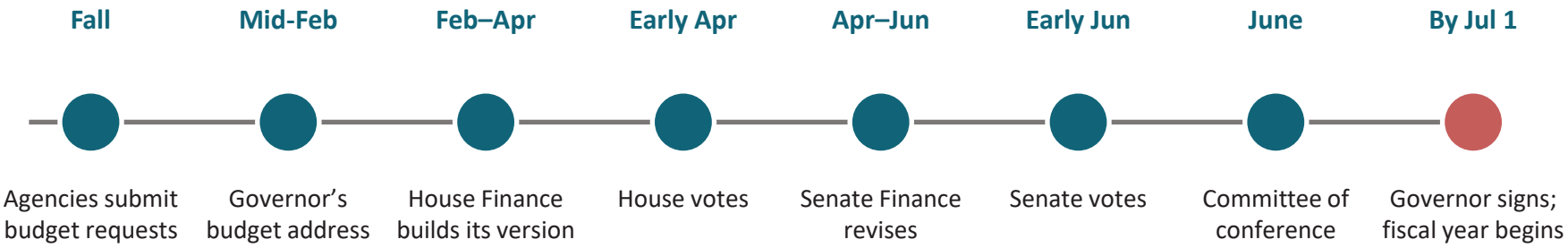
Divide the work

Testimony, grassroots, data, media, relationships

Groups that celebrated the Momnibus 2.0 win

- New Futures
- MomsRising
- New Hampshire Women's Foundation
- Reproductive Equity Now
- [Add other partners]

Follow the money: New Hampshire's budget cycle



HB 1 The operating budget: how much each agency can spend

HB 2 The trailer bill: law changes needed to carry out the budget, where policy bills often land

Your bill and the budget

Fiscal note = Finance

Bills that cost money usually get a second stop in the Finance committee

Folded into the budget

In budget years, policy bills can be tabled and their language added to HB 1 or HB 2

Plan for both paths

Brief Finance members and budget writers, not just your policy committee

Case study: Momnibus 2.0 passed the Senate 24-0, was tabled for possible inclusion in the budget, and became law in the FY 2026–2027 budget signed in June 2025.

PUTTING IT TOGETHER

A year in the life of a bill (budget year)

Summer

Listen, research, build the coalition

Sep–Oct

Recruit sponsors; LSRs filed

Nov–Dec

OLS drafting; review with sponsor

January

Bills released; hearings begin

February

Governor's budget; committee votes

Mar–Apr

Floor votes and crossover

May–June

Second chamber, budget, conference

July +

Implementation and rulemaking

Deadlines change each session. Check gc.nh.gov for this year's calendar.

After the governor signs, the work continues

Money and contracts

Budgets, Medicaid plan changes and insurer contracts put the law into practice

Rules and guidance

Agencies write the rules that say how the law actually works

Advocates keep watching

Track effective dates, rule notices and what happens on the ground

Example: The 2023 Momnibus law required Medicaid doula coverage and state certification. Doulas could first apply for certification in January 2026, after rules were written.

How a rule is made in New Hampshire

1 Agency drafts

Initial proposal under RSA 541-A

2 Fiscal impact

LBA prepares a fiscal impact statement

3 Notice filed

Published in the Rulemaking Register

4 Public hearing

At least 20 days after notice

5 Comments due

Written comments after the hearing

6 Final proposal

Agency revises and files with OLS

7 JLCAR review

Within 60 days of filing

8 JLCAR acts

Approve, conditionally approve or object

9 Rule adopted

Effective once filed with OLS

JLCAR: the legislature’s check on rules

10

Members: 5 House, 5 Senate

3rd

Friday of the month it usually meets

3

Options: approve, conditional approval, object

0

Vetoes: an objection can’t block a rule alone



What it means for advocates: a JLCAR objection shifts the burden of proof to the agency in court, and a vote for a joint resolution can delay a rule while the full legislature decides.

Rulemaking advocacy: follow the law all the way

- Ask sponsors and JLCAR members to weigh in on intent
- Watch the Rulemaking Register and agency notices
- Comment early, while the rule is still a draft
- Compare the rule to what the law intended
- Check the fiscal impact statement's cost assumptions
- Bring doulas, families and providers to the hearing

CASE STUDY

The doula rules hearing

- [Date]: [agency] hearing on [rule number]
- Advocates raised: [key concerns]
- Outcome: [what changed or what's next at JLCAR]

Bill Builders

Turn a community problem into a bill, win a champion and survive the budget, in 20 minutes



Groups of 5–6 | 20 minutes | Prize for the best pitch !

Pick your roles



Community Voice

Speaks for the people affected. Can veto anything that misses the point.



Drafter

Writes the bill title and the key provisions.



Legislator

Must be able to explain the bill in 30 seconds.



Coalition Partner

Finds allies and heads off turf battles.



Finance Chair

Keeps asking: how much, and who pays?

Group of 6? Add a Reporter who tracks every change and why.

Your challenge, step by step

2 min	1. Draw a problem card
4 min	2. Define who is affected and what they need
7 min	3. Write “AN ACT relative to…” and 3 key provisions
4 min	4. Draw a twist card and adapt your bill
3 min	5. Pitch in 60 seconds; the room votes OTP or ITL



Room vote

Hold up green for Ought to Pass or red for Inexpedient to Legislate. Biggest cheer wins.

Problem cards

1. Families in a rural county drive more than an hour to give birth
2. Parents who work evening shifts can’t find child care
3. Teens wait months for a mental health appointment
4. Child care programs and schools don’t share information when children start kindergarten
5. People in recovery lose their housing after a relapse
6. New parents with private insurance can’t afford a doula

Practice scenarios for this activity only

Twist cards

The fiscal note says your bill costs $3 million a year

A major industry group testifies against your bill

Another organization files a competing bill

Your prime sponsor is moved to a different committee

Finance offers to put your bill in HB 2 if you cut the cost in half

A powerful family story could win votes, but the family hasn’t agreed to share it

Debrief



When did your Community Voice push back, and how did the bill change?



Which twist hit hardest? Where in the real process could you have seen it coming?



How did cost shape your choices?



What is one thing you'll do differently on a real bill?

Key takeaways

- Start with the people most affected, and keep them in the loop
- Hand sponsors clear model language and research
- Build champions on both sides of the aisle early
- Move with the field and plan for the budget
- Follow the law through rulemaking and JLCAR



Resources: gc.nh.gov (bills, calendars, legislators) | New Futures trainings and Share Your Story | LBA budget documents |