

## FACT SHEET: HB456 – Clarifying Local Government Lobbying Rules

### What Does HB456 Do?

HB456 is designed to **increase transparency and accountability** in taxpayer-funded lobbying efforts while **preserving the rights of local officials to advocate on behalf of their communities**. HB456 prohibits the use of taxpayer sourced funds to be used for lobbying against legislative efforts.

### Key Points:

- Selectboards & Local Officials Can Still Advocate** – This bill does **not** prohibit selectboards, town officials, or municipal representatives from directly **testifying, speaking with legislators, or advocating for policies** on behalf of their communities.
- Prevents Taxpayer-Funded Third-Party Lobbying** – HB456 **only limits taxpayer dollars** from being used to hire outside lobbying firms or to pay dues to organizations that engage in lobbying. It also allows towns to raise and appropriate money specifically for lobbying purposes via taxation by calling on the “legislative body” of the municipality to conduct a special town meeting specifically for this purpose.
- Encourages Direct Representation** – The bill ensures that local governments speak for themselves, rather than relying on third-party groups that may not always reflect the priorities of individual towns.
- Does Not Impact Private or Volunteer Advocacy** – Private citizens, nonprofit organizations, and associations are **still free to lobby** as they choose. Town officials can also advocate on their own time or with private funding sources.

### What This Means for Your Town

- **Your town officials still have a voice in Concord.** The bill does not limit their ability to reach out to lawmakers, submit testimony, or engage in policy discussions.
- **Taxpayer dollars stay focused on core services.** Instead of funding lobbying groups, towns can invest in local priorities like infrastructure, education, and emergency services.
- **More transparency in government affairs.** Residents can be assured that their tax dollars are being spent on local needs rather than external lobbying groups.

### Addressing Concerns

**Concern:** "This bill silences local governments."

✓ **Reality:** It does not. Local officials can still speak directly to legislators, come to Concord to testify on legislation, and advocate for their communities as they always have.

**Concern:** "This will put towns at a disadvantage compared to other interest groups."

✓ **Reality:** Other special interests don't get to use taxpayer dollars for lobbying reasons. Towns still have a strong voice. HB456 simply ensures that taxpayer dollars aren't automatically funneled to third-party lobbying organizations, encouraging direct communication with state representatives.

**Concern:** "This prevents towns from using services such as human resources or bill-tracking that are also provided by firms which provide lobbying."

✓ **Reality:** Towns can still use public funds for these services. HB456 *only* prevents towns from using public funds for lobbying.

**Concern:** "This prevents towns from hiring lobbying firms altogether."

✓ **Reality:** Towns may still hire lobbying firms as long as they use non-taxpayer funding to do so AND they have a separate town meeting vote to affirm hiring such lobbyists.