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**Southern NH
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**Upper Valley Lake Sunapee
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Lebanon, NH 03766
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January 22, 2018

The Honorable James Belanger, Chairman
NH House Municipal and County Government Committee
Legislative Office Building, Room 301
Concord, NH 03301

Re: HB 1616

Dear Chairman Belanger,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on HB 1616 which would place restrictions on the ability of regional planning commissions to finance their operations in meeting their obligations under RSA 36:45-53. As you know, New Hampshire's Regional Planning Commissions provide technical assistance to municipalities on a broad range of issues and, as currently provided through RSA 36:49, are granted the authority to *accept and receive funds, grants, and services from the federal government or its agencies* to facilitate efforts in carrying out their duties. HB 1616 proposes a modification to this statute which would require a regional planning commission to receive the prior approval of the general court in order to *accept or receive any funds, grants, or services from governmental sources outside of the state of New Hampshire or its political subdivisions*. As you review the bill, we ask that you consider the following:

- The modification to RSA 36:49 as proposed in the bill represents a direct contrast to how regional planning commissions have met their financing needs for decades in order to effectively serve New Hampshire's communities and other stakeholders while also supplementing the efforts of state agencies. Furthermore, the modification appears to contradict the spirit and intent of the two prior sentences of the current statute.
- A requirement to obtain approval from the general court would render regional planning commissions non-competitive in applying for federal grants due to the timing involved in obtaining such approval. Federal grant opportunities are extremely competitive and have associated timelines for both application submittal and spending of funds. The time required to bring before, and gain approval from, the general court would severely limit these funding opportunities and, thus, the ability of regional planning commissions to be responsive to its member municipalities. .
- Specific state and/or federal laws require functions which are provided by regional planning commissions in New Hampshire in areas such as transportation planning and emergency management which are supported almost exclusively by federal funding.
- Much has been accomplished through direct support arrangements between regional planning commissions and federal agencies. Examples include community and economic development (Department of Commerce, USDA Rural Development); resource management, coastal issues, brownfields assessment (Environmental Protection Agency); broadband planning (National Telecommunications and Information Administration within DOC); and overall regional planning (Housing and Urban Development) to name a few. The modification of the statute proposed in HB 1616 would severely compromise the continued progress of these and future similar efforts.

NHARPC's position is that HB 1616 would significantly hinder the ability of regional planning commissions to finance their operations and perform their duties and, therefore, is not in the best interests of the state of New Hampshire or its municipalities.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide input in your consideration of HB 1616. Please feel free to contact me with any questions you may have or for clarification.

Sincerely,

Glenn Coppelman

Glenn Coppelman
Chairman