



State of New Hampshire

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
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COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION
Representative Rick Ladd, Chairman

Department of Education

FEB 09 2024

February 5, 2024

Commissioner Frank Edelblut
NH Department of Education
101 Pleasant Street
Concord NH 03301

Dear Commissioner Edelblut,

The House Education Committee recently recommended Inexpedient to Legislate for HB 1471, declaring the total solar eclipse a school holiday. Although the committee recognizes the educational value and learning opportunity associated with the eclipse event, the committee is of the opinion that the bill is not ready for legislation for the following reasons:

1. The bill authorizes the department to adopt rules in accordance with rulemaking provisions of RSA 541-A in order to implement the bill's sections. Due to the solar eclipse occurring on April 8, 2024, the timeline necessary for rulemaking is simply not available.
2. The bill directs the Department of Education to waive compulsory attendance on both April 8 and April 9, 2024. The committee questioned if all students absent on those days, regardless if they viewed the eclipse or not, would have their attendance waived, and how will these waived school days impact school calendars previously approved by the department?
3. The bill also contains language stating that "viewing events immediately before, during and after the moment of totality are encouraged." The bill contains no mention of how to protect one's eyes while viewing the total solar eclipse. NASA as well as other organizations have published materials that address, "That when viewing any part of the bright sun through a camera lens, binoculars, or telescope without a special purpose solar filter secured over the front of the optics will instantly cause severe injury." NASA further communicates when watching the partial phases of the solar eclipse directly with unprotected eyes, severe damage to eyes can occur. The bill suggests that students view the eclipse before, during and after, but does make any reference to how to protect "eyes."

Lastly, the committee does recognize the educational opportunity to embed eclipse activities into curriculum and instruction, but in doing so, that schools communicate proper safety precautions to students and staff, especially, if activities take place outside buildings. The committee absolutely endorses this instruction, but also suggests, as a best practice, that a safety advisory bulletin regarding how to view the total solar eclipse be available from the department and sent to all public schools.

Thank you for your consideration,

NH Rep Rick Ladd
Chairman, House Education