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## Governor Blocks Bill Targeting Harmful School Materials

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New Hampshire Governor Kelly Ayotte has vetoed legislation that aimed to limit access to school materials considered inappropriate for children, citing concerns about subjective enforcement and existing parental safeguards already in place.

House Bill 324, which was championed by Republican lawmakers, sought to prohibit schools across the state from distributing content labeled “harmful to minors.” Supporters

argued the measure would have strengthened protections for students by ensuring that instructional materials remained age-appropriate. The legislation passed both the state House of Representatives and Senate along party lines earlier this year.

Under the proposal, local school boards would have been required to create clear procedures to handle parental complaints about books and educational content. The legislation also empowered the Office of the Attorney General to bring civil action against any school district that failed to comply. Advocates maintained that the bill was a necessary step to prevent minors from being exposed to explicit themes without adequate oversight.

Governor Ayotte, a mother of two, explained that she shared parents' concerns about shielding children but believed the state already provides families with the tools to object to questionable materials. She noted that New Hampshire law obliges schools to notify parents at least two weeks in advance when curricula include discussions of sexual education, sexual orientation, gender identity, or related issues. If parents object in writing, schools must offer an alternative lesson agreed upon by the district and the family.

"This legislation establishes a system that imposes monetary penalties based on highly subjective standards of literary value and appropriateness," Ayotte said in her veto message, emphasizing that current statutes effectively protect children without inviting costly legal disputes.

While some Republican legislators voiced disappointment over the veto, expressing concerns that important safeguards were being set aside, the National Education Association of New Hampshire (NEA-NH), the state's largest teachers' union, applauded the decision. NEA-NH President Megan Tuttle said the veto respected students' right to access a broad range of literature while still preserving parents' ability to opt their children out.

Representative Glenn Cordelli, a Republican from Tuftonboro, acknowledged that efforts to override the veto faced long odds but stressed that lawmakers would continue to inform the public about the bill's intent.

Ultimately, the debate underscores an ongoing struggle over how to balance parental rights with educational freedom, a topic likely to remain central in New Hampshire's policy discussions.