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New Hampshire Governor MAGGIE HASSAN

Press Release

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Governor Hassan's Veto Message Regarding HB 449

CONCORD – Governor Maggie Hassan released the following message after vetoing HB 449:

"By the authority vested in me, pursuant to part II, Article 44 of the New Hampshire Constitution, on July 6th, 2015, I have vetoed House Bill 449, relative to the duration of child support.

"Finishing high school or high school equivalency programs is vitally important to the economic well-being of our youth, helping them develop the skills and innovative thinking necessary for success in the 21st century economy, and current law requires that child support continues until a child graduates from high school, even if the child is over age 18. House Bill 449, if enacted, would end child support orders for any child over the age of 18 who chooses to pursue the HiSET or any other high school equivalency program as opposed to attending a traditional high school. In doing so, I believe this bill would create two different standards for youth and their families, elevating one path to completing education above another.

"As a state, we have recognized that not every child thrives in the traditional classroom environment and have worked to offer alternatives to allow students to finish their high school degrees so that they may better compete in the workforce and participate in higher education if they so choose. For example, in 2014, 317 New Hampshire students between the ages of 16 and 19 completed the HiSET exam. This legislation would say those children no longer merit the support of both of their parents as they work to complete their high school education and prepare themselves for future success.

"It is also unclear what impact this legislation might have on home-schooled students, who do not attend a traditional high school but may participate in a high school equivalency program as part of their efforts to enter the workforce or apply for college.

"House Bill 449 would also terminate child support forever if a child over the age of 18 is incarcerated, even if the incarceration is only for a short duration and the child returns to high school, which could greatly inhibit our efforts to help youthful offenders put their lives back on track.

"A child who is struggling in a traditional high school environment but pursuing a high school equivalency degree may still need the support – both emotional and financial – of their parents. It should not be arbitrarily withdrawn because they are taking a slightly different path than others in their age group.

"It may be appropriate to place time limits on how long a child has to finish an equivalency program, but to arbitrarily cut off child support on the first day a child chooses a different path is not good for the children of our state. Therefore, I have vetoed House Bill 449."