

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 23, 2015

CONTACT

AnnMarie French
afrench@nhfpi.org
603.856.8337 x2

Building a Better Budget Conference Examines State Budget Priorities, State Tax System; Strategies to Strengthen NH's Middle Class

CONCORD, NH – The New Hampshire Fiscal Policy Institute (NHFPI) today convened *Building a Better Budget: Meeting Today's Needs, Preparing for Tomorrow* to provide a forum for dialogue around how to build a budget that allows the Granite State to create, maintain, and restore the public structures that are vital to a vibrant economy.

"New Hampshire's budget is a statement of priorities, a reflection of the values that we hold as a state, as a society, as a people," said NHFPI Executive Director Jeff McLynch. "It is time to begin a thoughtful dialogue around how the state sets priorities and how we can ensure that New Hampshire is a place where everyone has access to opportunities to thrive and prosper."

The event opened with a panel discussion which examined several key elements of New Hampshire's state budget, with an emphasis on current and long-term needs pertaining to transportation, higher education, mental health, and income support programs. Panelists included Christopher Clement, former commissioner, New Hampshire Department of Transportation; Amy Messer, legal director, Disability Rights Center; Kristyn Van Ostern, associate vice chancellor and chief financial officer, Community College System of New Hampshire; and Ife Floyd, policy analyst, Center on Budget and Policy Priorities.

A second panel of national tax policy experts examined New Hampshire's revenue system and offered insights into how other states approach taxation and practices that would make the Granite State's revenue system more sound and more fair. Panelists included Norton Francis, senior research associate, Urban Institute; Carl Davis, senior policy analyst, Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy; and Dan Bucks, former director for the Montana Department of Revenue.

The nearly 140 participants, which included New Hampshire legislators, nonprofit and community leaders, and concerned citizens, were provided with an opportunity to engage in dialogue around how New Hampshire could build a budget that better meets the needs of low- and moderate-income families and individuals struggling to get by.

The event concluded with a keynote address by Anna Chu, director of the Middle-Out Economics project at the Center for American Progress, who illustrated how a strong and stable middle class is the key driver of economic growth and outlined strategies to help New Hampshire support its middle-class and increase economic opportunities for all Granite Staters.

NHFPI's second annual policy conference, *Building a Better Budget* was made possible with the support of lead event sponsor the National Education Association-NH (NEA-NH) and the following partner organizations: Child and Family Services, American Federation of Teachers-NH (AFT-NH),

New Futures, Full Circle Consulting, Louis Karno and Company, and Kieschnick Consulting Services.

The New Hampshire Fiscal Policy Institute is an independent, non-profit, non-partisan organization dedicated to exploring, developing, and promoting public policies that foster economic opportunity and prosperity for all New Hampshire residents, with an emphasis on low- and moderate-income families and individuals. Learn more at www.nhfpi.org.

-30-