STATEMENT OF RICHARD SILVERMAN, PRESIDENT OF ALUMNI COUNCIL, DARTMOUTH COLLEGE, BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMERCE COMMITTEE ON HB 1292, AN ACT RELATIVE TO AMENDING THE CHARTER OF DARTMOUTH COLLEGE

Chairman Reardon and members of the committee –

Thank you for this opportunity to testify on behalf of the Dartmouth Alumni Council regarding House Bill 1292. My name is Richard Silverman, and I am current president of the Dartmouth Alumni Council. I am joined today by Martha Beattie, the immediate past-president, and John Daukas, the president-elect of the Council. In a moment, Mr. Daukas will provide a brief description of the Alumni Council and its historic role at the College to help clarify our representative nature.

We come today to present a resolution which was passed by the Alumni Council on Monday, January 14 in opposition to HB 1292. The resolution was circulated to the 98 voting members of the Council, with a one week period during which time representatives could submit their votes. Sixty-five councilors responded, all in favor of the resolution indicating their opposition to HB 1292.

While not all councilors were able to respond in the short voting period, we feel confident that the sentiment expressed by those members who did respond is representative of the majority of Dartmouth alumni. Indeed, alumni who have contacted us regarding this issue have expressed little understanding of the purpose behind this legislation, which seems arcane and anachronistic. Although there have always been and will always be differences in opinion within the alumni body about issues facing the College, we strongly believe that such issues should be resolved within the Dartmouth family. Reinstating legislative oversight of the nature proposed in the bill is not the appropriate response.

With this in mind, I would like to read to you the resolution:
RESOLUTION OF THE DARTMOUTH COLLEGE ALUMNI COUNCIL
CONCERNING NEW HAMPSHIRE HOUSE BILL 1292

WHEREAS, the Alumni Council of Dartmouth College “serve[s] as a representative organization of Dartmouth alumni acting in the best interest of Dartmouth College,” and “serve[s] as the primary forum for the discussion of issues and concerns relative to the alumni body and Dartmouth College”; and

WHEREAS, private, non-profit organizations in New Hampshire generally have the legal right to amend their own charters and articles of incorporation without permission by the State Legislature in each instance; and

WHEREAS, House Bill 1292 would deprive Dartmouth College of this right; and

WHEREAS, House Bill 1292 constitutes an attempt to use the power of the State Legislature to intervene in a private dispute concerning the appropriate governance structure for Dartmouth College; and

WHEREAS, HB 1292 would be a dangerous precedent, threatening the academic freedom of all colleges and universities in New Hampshire and the autonomy of all private, non-profit organizations in the State;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED:

1. that the Alumni Council of Dartmouth College opposes New Hampshire House Bill 1292 of the 2008 Session, a bill that would repeal Chapter 161 of the Laws of 2003, on the grounds that it believes HB 1292 is contrary to the best interests of Dartmouth College and her alumni.

2. that the officers of the Council shall transmit a copy of this resolution to the House Commerce Committee of the New Hampshire Legislature and to other committees with jurisdiction over HB 1292.

Thank you for your consideration.