



NAMI
National Alliance on Mental Illness

NAMI | New Hampshire

January 9, 2019

Honorable Chairman Robert Renny Cushing
Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee
Legislative Office Building, Room 204
36 North State Street
Concord, New Hampshire 03301

Re: HB349 Relative to a Second Opinion on Health Care matters for State and County Prisoners

Dear Mr. Chairman and Committee Members:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify and to provide written and oral testimony and feedback on HB349.

My name is Kenneth Norton and I serve as the Executive Director of NAMI NH, the National Alliance on Mental Illness. I also have a family member with a serious mental illness and a co-occurring substance use disorder who has experienced repeated periods of incarceration.

On behalf of NAMI NH I am here today to speak in support of HB349.

NAMI NH regularly receives input from families of incarcerated individuals and other mental health professionals that individuals who are incarcerated do not receive appropriate diagnosis and/or treatment for their mental health conditions. This often leads to a regression in their overall mental health and well-being, which increases the difficulty of successful transition back to the community and the likelihood of recidivism.

State and county facilities are under-resourced to address mental health issues for their detainees due to a lack of qualified in-house staff and funding for staff and programs. This is especially notable at the County level where there is a wide difference of mental health care across county jails with some having robust programs and others offering very little mental health services. Having the opportunity to obtain a second opinion from a neutral clinician will help provide a tool for obtaining necessary mental health treatment and will aid in the discharge planning process to a less restrictive alternative and more clinically appropriate setting.

Thank you for your consideration and I would be happy to answer any questions which you may have.

Respectfully submitted,

Kenneth Norton, LICSW
Executive Director

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