



National Alliance on Mental Illness

NAMI New Hampshire

February 13, 2019

Honorable Robert Renny Cushing, Chairman
House Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee
107 North Main Street
Concord, New Hampshire 03301

Dear Mr. Chairman and Committee Members:

My name is Kenneth Norton and I am the Executive Director of NAMI NH, the National Alliance on Mental Illness. I have worked extensively in the field of suicide prevention as a Licensed Clinical Social Worker in NH, as well as in suicide prevention public health efforts in NH and nationally. I have served as a subject matter expert on suicide prevention for the Department of Defense, Defense Center on Excellence and the Substance Abuse Mental Health Services Administration. I have also served as a member of the Steering Committee of the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline for over a decade. And I also serve on NH's legislatively established Suicide Prevention Council of which there are several other members here to testify today. NAMI NH's primary focus for HB 514 is suicide prevention and toward that end we are here to testify in support of HB 514.

Too often the debate about firearms in our country has involved homicide deaths and largely ignored suicide. Suicide deaths by firearms in the US are more than double the number of homicide firearms deaths.

The US Surgeon General has identified suicide as a public health issue that is largely preventable. In a report released by the US Center for disease control in June of 2018 looking at suicide rates across the US, New Hampshire was identified as having one of the largest increases in suicide rates compared to other states. As indicated by the chart, in New Hampshire, suicide is the second leading cause of death ages 15-34, third leading cause ages 35-44 and fourth leading cause of death ages 45-54. Almost half, 49% of the suicide deaths in NH involve firearms. Unlike almost



NH Leading Causes of Death: 2013-2017

Rank	Age Groups										All Ages
	<1	1-4	5-9	10-14	15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+	
1	Congenital Anomalies 37	Congenital Anomalies 37	Malignant Neoplasms 59	Malignant Neoplasms 59	Unintentional Injuries 119	Unintentional Injuries 119	Unintentional Injuries 119	Malignant Neoplasms 2,004	Malignant Neoplasms 2,004	Heart Disease 10,789	Malignant Neoplasms 13,896
2	Heart Disease 38	Heart Disease 38	Heart Disease 38	Heart Disease 38	Heart Disease 38	Heart Disease 38	Malignant Neoplasms 2,004	Heart Disease 1,298	Heart Disease 1,298	Malignant Neoplasms 1,817	Heart Disease 12,811
3	Malignant Neoplasms 39	Unintentional Injuries 39	Unintentional Injuries 39	Unintentional Injuries 39	Heart Disease 119	Malignant Neoplasms 374	Heart Disease 119	Unintentional Injuries 54	Unintentional Injuries 54	Chronic Liver Disease 1,011	Unintentional Injuries 1,011
4	Cerebrovascular Disease 41	Influenza & Pneumonia 41	Bergh Neoplasms 41	Bergh Neoplasms 41	Malignant Neoplasms 119	Heart Disease 43	Heart Disease 119	Heart Disease 119	Chronic Liver Disease 1,011	Chronic Liver Disease 1,011	Chronic Liver Disease 3,482
5	Phacocortical Myopia 42	Heart Disease 42	Heart Disease 42	Congenital Anomalies 42	Heart Disease 42	Congenital Anomalies 42	Liver Disease 47	Liver Disease 105	Liver Disease 266	Alzheimer's Disease 2,865	Cerebrovascular Disease 3,278
6	Infectious Diseases 43	Malignant Neoplasms 43	Cerebrovascular Disease 43	Chronic Liver Disease 43	Chronic Liver Disease 43	Liver Disease 47	Diabetes Mellitus 28	Diabetes Mellitus 48	Diabetes Mellitus 266	Unintentional Injuries 1,117	Alzheimer's Disease 2,865
7	Respiratory Diseases 44	Bergh Neoplasms 44	Congenital Anomalies 44	Influenza & Pneumonia 44	Diabetes Mellitus 44	Heart Disease 44	Chronic Liver Disease 47	Chronic Liver Disease 105	Chronic Liver Disease 266	Diabetes Mellitus 1,572	Diabetes Mellitus 1,574
8	Respiratory Diseases 45	Diabetes Mellitus 45	Diabetes Mellitus 45	Nephritis 45	Congenital Anomalies 45	Chronic Liver Disease 47	Heart Disease 47	Cerebrovascular Disease 73	Cerebrovascular Disease 167	Diabetes Mellitus 1,572	Diabetes Mellitus 1,574
9	Neurological Diseases 46	Diabetes Mellitus 46	Diabetes Mellitus 46	Pneumonia 46	Cerebrovascular Disease 46	Chronic Liver Disease 47	Chronic Liver Disease 105	Cerebrovascular Disease 73	Sepsis 31	Sepsis 37	Hypertension 1,228
10	Diabetes Mellitus 47	Diabetes Mellitus 47	Diabetes Mellitus 47	Pneumonia 47	Cerebrovascular Disease 47	Chronic Liver Disease 47	Chronic Liver Disease 105	Cerebrovascular Disease 73	Sepsis 31	Sepsis 37	Hypertension 1,228

Source: CDC WISQARS, 2013-2017

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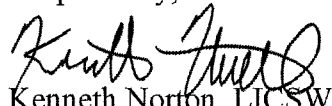
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every other method of suicide, use of a firearm in a suicide attempt is almost always lethal and leaves little opportunity for intervention. While people may contemplate suicide for a long period of time, when they make the decision to end their life there is often very little time elapsed between that point and them making an attempt. It is important to note that 90% of people who survive a suicide attempt do not go on to die by suicide. This bill to establish a waiting period between purchase and delivery of a firearm can be effective in saving lives by putting time between the decision to take one's life and immediate access to the purchase of a firearm. There is a strong evidence base of emerging research that waiting periods can be effective in reducing suicide rates. While it may seem counterintuitive, there is also research which indicates if the means someone intends to use are thwarted, they won't look for an alternative. Meaning, a person who is suicidal and intent on using a firearm will not necessarily seek to use an alternative method.

NAMI NH believes that House Bill 514 seeks an appropriate balance between a person's right to purchase a firearm and taking affirmative steps to reduce the senseless tragedy of suicide deaths. Please vote HB 514 as ought to pass.

I am happy to answer any questions which you may have.

Respectfully,


Kenneth Norton, LICSW
Executive Director