



Honorable Lucy Webber  
House Health and Human Services and Elderly Affairs  
32 North State Street Room 205  
Concord, NH 03301

April 3, 2019

Madam Chairman and Members of the Committee:

My name is Kenneth Norton and I am the Executive Director of NAMI New Hampshire (National Alliance on Mental Illness). I have multiple family members with mental illness, and or co- occurring substance use disorders. I am also a Licensed Independent Clinical Social Worker and former foster parent and I have both personal and professional experience with our mental health system. On behalf of NAMI NH, I am here to testify in support of Senate Bill 292

A great deal of effort and public input went into the development of New Hampshire's 10 year Mental Health Plan released in January of 2019. The plan came with 14 priority recommendations including proposed budget allocations for FY 20/21. Some of those priority recommendations have already been left out of the proposed budget which House Finance Committee will vote on next week.

For individuals and families impacted by mental illness, this has been a confusing process. Many are here to testify today as this bill was the only bill which named the 10 plan in its title, and prior to being amended had included a fiscal note representing the total amount of proposed funding for the 14 priority recommendations.

Many of the people testifying today, as well as a few of you experienced the complete failure to implement the previous 10 year mental health plan completed in 2008. While the reasons for this are many, and not something we will go into today, our failure to do so profoundly impacted many lives and also resulted in several Federal Class Action Lawsuits filed against the state. One clear take away is that as we move forward with this plan, there needs to be some mechanism of accountability relative to implementing and perhaps more importantly, improving our mental health system. What are the measures and benchmarks which we will use to evaluate implementation, and make recommendations in the years to come?

While NAMI NH welcomes this bill as a step in that direction, we wonder whether it will go far enough? Over the next 10 years we will have 5 gubernatorial and legislative elections, we will likely see a new commissioner of the Department of Health and Human Services and undoubtedly a period of recession or less robust economic times than we have now. Do we need a higher level of accountability in order to fully enact and evaluate that plan. We have seen this for DCYF with the Office of Child Advocate. Is there a need for a similar office or Commission to review and address implementation efforts over the next 10 years.

Thank you for your consideration and I am happy to answer any question which you have.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kenneth Norton". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "K" and "N".

Kenneth Norton  
Executive Director

*Find Help, Find Hope.*

NAMI New Hampshire • 85 North State Street • Concord, NH 03301  
InfoLine: 800-242-6264 • Tel. 603-225-5359 • Fax 603-228-8848 • [info@naminh.org](mailto:info@naminh.org) / [www.NAMINH.org](http://www.NAMINH.org)