



April 23, 2019

Chairman Edward Butler
House Commerce and Consumer Affairs Committee
Legislative Office Building – Room 100
33 North State Street
Concord, NH 03301

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Kenneth Norton and I serve as Executive Director of NAMI NH, the National Alliance on Mental Illness. I also have family members with serious mental illness and co-occurring substance use disorder. On behalf of NAMI NH, I am here today to speak in support of SB 224.

The National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) recognizes the importance of effective treatment for Pediatric Autoimmune Neuropsychiatric Disorders Associated with Streptococcal Infections referred to by the acronym of PANDAS.

Strep is a common childhood illness with estimates being that the average grade school student can have as many as 2-3 cases of Strep each year. However, PANDAS is a relatively rare illness that can occur when antibodies which fight the strep infection get cross wired and begin to attack brain tissue with the result being the onset of symptoms which may include severe anxiety, tics, and obsessive-compulsive behaviors as well as moodiness and irritability. A primary diagnostic criterion is a notable decrease in the child's ability to function. The onset may be rapid and concurrent with the onset of Strep or weeks and months afterward.

Emerging research has established the connection between PANDAS and Strep, with the National Institute of Mental Health officially recognizing the diagnostic criteria for it in 2012. The recent recognition of the criteria for the diagnosis means despite the severity of these disorders, many pediatricians are not familiar with it and the illness often goes unrecognized, misdiagnosed and untreated.

Having insurance companies cover these disorders and their treatment is an important step forward. Therefore, on behalf of NAMI NH, the National Alliance on Mental Illness, I urge you to vote SB 224 as ought to pass.

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

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kenneth Norton". The signature is written in a cursive style with some loops and flourishes.

Kenneth Norton
Executive Director