

April 30, 2019

Honorable Martha Hennessey
Senate Judiciary Committee
107 North Main Street
Concord, New Hampshire 03301

Dear Madam Chair 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



NH Leading Causes of Death: 2013-2017

Rank	Age Groups										
	<1	1-4	5-9	10-14	15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+	All Ages
1	Congenital Anomalies 37	Congenital Anomalies	Malignant Neoplasms 19	Malignant Neoplasms 12	Unintentional Injury 70	Unintentional Injury 70	Unintentional Injury 70	Malignant Neoplasms 209	Malignant Neoplasms 2,604	Heart Disease 10,790	Malignant Neoplasms 13,696
2	Short Gestation 33	Homicide	Homicide	Unintentional Injury 142	Suicide 142	Suicide 172	Malignant Neoplasms 214	Heart Disease 545	Heart Disease 1,298	Malignant Neoplasms 8,817	Heart Disease 12,821
3	Maternal Pregnancy Comp. 25	Unintentional Injury	Unintentional Injury	Suicide	Heart Disease 19	Malignant Neoplasms 74	Suicide 185	Unintentional Injury 546	Unintentional Injury 409	Chronic Low Respiratory Disease 2,011	Unintentional Injury 3,281
4	Circulatory System Disease 11	Influenza & Pneumonia	Benign Neoplasms	Benign Neoplasms	Malignant Neoplasms 15	Heart Disease 43	Heart Disease 116	Suicide 205	Chronic Low Respiratory Disease 366	Cerebrovascular Disease 2,117	Chronic Low Respiratory Disease 3,482
5	Placenta Cord Membranes 11	Heart Disease	Heart Disease	Congenital Anomalies	Homicide 12	Congenital Anomalies 12	Liver Disease 47	Liver Disease 155	Liver Disease 268	Alzheimer's Disease 2,810	Cerebrovascular Disease 2,976
6	Immunine Hypoxia	Malignant Neoplasms	Cerebrovascular Disease	Chronic Low Respiratory Disease	Chronic Low Respiratory Disease	Liver Disease 11	Diabetes Mellitus 22	Diabetes Mellitus 98	Diabetes Mellitus 266	Unintentional Injury 1,477	Alzheimer's Disease 2,045
7	Respiratory Distress	Benign Neoplasms	Congenital Anomalies	Influenza & Pneumonia	Diabetes Mellitus	Homicide 16	Chronic Low Respiratory Disease 17	Chronic Low Respiratory Disease 81	Suicide 214	Diabetes Mellitus 1,177	Diabetes Mellitus 1,574
8	Neonatal Heroin Abuse	Diabetes Mellitus		Nephritis	Congenital Anomalies	Chronic Low Respiratory Disease	Homicide 16	Cerebrovascular Disease 73	Cerebrovascular Disease 167	Influenza & Pneumonia 1,824	Suicide 1,119
9	Noninfecting Enterocolitis			Pneumonia	Cerebrovascular Disease	Complicated Pregnancy	Cerebrovascular Disease 14	Septicemia 31	Septicemia 87	Nephritis 799	Influenza & Pneumonia 1,128
10	SIDS			Benign Neoplasms	Diabetes Mellitus	Congenital Anomalies	Nephritis 27	Influenza & Pneumonia 87	Parturition's Disease 87	Nephritis 694	

Source: CDC WISQARS, 2013-2017

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,

Find Help, Find Hope.

49% of the suicide deaths in NH involve firearms. Unlike almost 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.

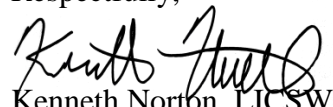
There is also a lot of anecdotal information to support that putting time between purchase and delivery of a firearm can be life-saving. One such example resulted in the NH Firearm Safety Committee's "Gun Shop Project" which has become a national model by bringing together gun shop owners, firing range operators and suicide prevention advocates to work together to prevent suicide deaths. Although they have taken no position on this bill, this coalition came together after an incident several years ago where three suicide deaths using fire arms occurred in New Hampshire in an eleven day period where each of the individuals had purchased the gun they used to take their life from the same gun shop immediately preceding their deaths.

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