

January 22, 2020

Honorable Representative Rene Cushing
 House Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee
 33 North State Street – LOB 210-211
 Concord, New Hampshire 03301

Dear Chairman Cushing and Committee Members:

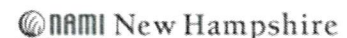
My name is Kenneth Norton and I am the Executive Director of NAMI NH, the National Alliance on Mental Illness. I have worked extensively in the field of suicide prevention as a Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW) in NH, as well as in suicide prevention public health efforts in NH and nationally. I 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. Closer to home, I 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 1101 is suicide prevention and toward that end we are here to testify in support of HB 1101.

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



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 12	Malignant Neoplasms 13	Heart Disease 212	Heart Disease 219	Malignant Neoplasms 214	Malignant Neoplasms 308	Malignant Neoplasms 2,024	Heart Disease 10,793	Malignant Neoplasms 13,095
2	Short Duration 33	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
3	Maternal Pregnancy Comp. 25	...	...	...	Heart Disease 19	Malignant Neoplasms 74	Heart Disease 102	...	...	Chronic Low Respiratory Disease 2,011	...
4	Cholera System Disease 11	Influenza & Pneumonia ...	Benign Neoplasms ...	Benign Neoplasms ...	Malignant Neoplasms 15	Heart Disease 43	Heart Disease 116	...	Chronic Low Respiratory Disease 366	Chronic Low Respiratory Disease 2,117	Chronic Low Respiratory Disease 3,482
5	Pneumonia 11	Heart Disease ...	Heart Disease ...	Congenital Anomalies ...	...	Congenital Anomalies 13	Liver Disease 47	Liver Disease 155	Liver Disease 368	Alzheimer's Disease 2,810	Chronic Low Respiratory Disease 2,256
6	Influenza 11	Malignant Neoplasms ...	Chronic Low Respiratory Disease ...	Chronic Low Respiratory Disease ...	Chronic Low Respiratory Disease 11	Liver Disease 11	Diabetes Mellitus 22	Diabetes Mellitus 88	Diabetes Mellitus 368	Alzheimer's Disease 1,627	Alzheimer's Disease 2,045
7	Respiratory Disease ...	Benign Neoplasms ...	Congenital Anomalies ...	Influenza & Pneumonia ...	Diabetes Mellitus ...	...	Chronic Low Respiratory Disease 17	Chronic Low Respiratory Disease 82	Chronic Low Respiratory Disease 368	Diabetes Mellitus 1,127	Diabetes Mellitus 1,574
8	Neonatal Herpes Infection ...	Diabetes Mellitus ...	...	Nephritis ...	Congenital Anomalies ...	Chronic Low Respiratory Disease 14	...	Chronic Low Respiratory Disease 73	Chronic Low Respiratory Disease 167	Influenza & Pneumonia 1,284	...
9	Neonatal Sepsis ...	...	...	Pneumonia ...	Chronic Low Respiratory Disease 14	Chronic Low Respiratory Disease 14	Chronic Low Respiratory Disease 14	Septicemia 31	Septicemia 87	Nephritis 189	Influenza & Pneumonia 1,128
10	IDS ...	...	...	Benign Neoplasms ...	Diabetes Mellitus ...	Congenital Anomalies ...	Nephritis 27	Influenza & Pneumonia 67	Influenza & Pneumonia 67	Alzheimer's Disease 887	Nephritis 88

Source: CDC, NISQARS, 2013-2017



US, New Hampshire was identified as having one of the largest increases in suicide rates compared to other states. As indicated by the chart above, 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.

Find Help, Find Hope

NAMI New Hampshire • 85 North State Street • Concord, NH 03301
 InfoLine: 800-242-6264 • Tel: 603-225-5359 • info@NAMINH.org • www.NAMINH.org

"The Gun Shop Project" a now national suicide prevention strategy involving gun shop and firing range owners which promotes friends and family intervening with a friend or loved one at risk to voluntarily surrender their firearms, originated when it was observed through our Medical Examiner's office that three suicide deaths had occurred in a 10-day period within hours of the decedent purchasing a firearm, all from the same gun shop.

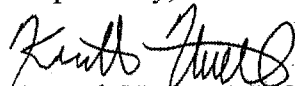
Unlike almost every other method of suicide, use of a firearm in a suicide attempt is almost always lethal and leaves little opportunity for intervention. While people may contemplate suicide for a long period of time, when they make the decision to end their life there is often very little time elapsed 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.

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 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 1101 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 1101 as ought to pass.

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

Respectfully,



Kenneth Norton, LICSW
Executive Director