



NAMI
National Alliance on Mental Illness

January 23, 2020

New Hampshire

Honorable Lucy Weber
Health, Human Services and Elderly Affairs Committee
Legislative Office Building – Room 205
36 N. State Street
Concord, NH 03301

Madam Chair and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Julia Brackett and I am the Public Policy Assistant at NAMI NH, the National Alliance on Mental Illness. I also have experience living with mental illness and being a friend and family member of individuals who live with mental illness.

The goal of the Board of Mental Health Practice is to assist those in need with finding quality services and healthcare professionals and protect the mental healthcare consumer against harm that may be done by any uncertified, unlicensed, or in any other way unqualified practitioners. This is an important and necessary practice in terms of the care of those living with mental illness.

While it is important to include the expertise of licensed mental health practitioners in making decisions and providing assistance, no one knows what mental healthcare consumers need more than another mental healthcare consumer.

Adding a Peer Support Specialist to the Board of Mental Health Practice would be adding the perspective of an individual with lived-experience of a mental health condition or substance use disorder. Peer specialists are often trained to assist others with recovery, and they provide support, mentoring and guidance by using their own lived-experiences.

Many consider experience to be the greatest teacher, and for those living with mental health conditions, peers help to provide increased self-esteem and confidence, empowerment, hope, empathy, social support and functioning, and more.

When Peer Support Specialists are providing so much to those living and learning with mental health conditions, it only seems right to include them in the work of the Board of Mental Health Practice. Those of us living with mental health conditions deserve someone speaking **for** us rather than **about** us; as well as being able to work **with** those trying to help us. That said, it is the position of NAMI NH, that the Peer Support Specialist should be a full voting member of the Board and we request that the bill be amended accordingly. With that proposed change, we urge you to vote HB 1521 as ought to pass.

Thank you for your consideration and for reading my testimony.

Respectfully,

Julia Brackett (JB)
Public Policy Assistant

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