



January 28, 2020

Honorable Chairman Thomas Sherman
Senate Health and Human Services Committee Room 101
36 North State Street
Concord, New Hampshire 03301

Dear Chairman Sherman:

My name is Ken Norton and I serve as the Executive Director of NAMI NH, the National Alliance on Mental Illness. I am an adoptive parent and a former licensed foster parent. I also have family members who have mental illness as well substance misuse disorders who have been involved in the criminal justice system as a result of their mental health conditions. On behalf of NAMI NH, I am here today to speak in support of SB 716 regarding Medicaid Coverage for Child Health and Development.

National research indicates that one in five adults experience a mental illness with one in twenty-five living with a serious mental illness. Seventeen percent of youth ages six through sixteen have a mental health disorder. One half of all chronic mental illness occurs before the age of fourteen and three quarters before the age of twenty-four. Despite these statistics 49% of young people with a mental health condition do not receive treatment.

Maternal depression which encompasses perinatal depression, postpartum depression and postpartum psychosis are estimated to impact up to 15% of women. Symptoms can range from mild to severe including suicide and (rarely) infanticide/suicide. Maternal depression often goes undiagnosed and untreated and can have serious detrimental impact on mother, baby and family.

During the past decade, we have learned a great deal about the often-lifelong impacts of adverse childhood experiences (ACES) and trauma. As a former foster parent and as an adoptive DCYF parent, I have personally observed the long-term impact trauma has on children. The current addiction/opioid crisis has exposed many more children in our state to trauma and adverse childhood experiences.

The good news with all this research is that we have seen early intervention and treatment can have a positive effect on stemming the long-term impact of childhood trauma and mental health conditions. NH has taken significant positive steps during the past few years in developing an effective system of care for children with mental health conditions. The system

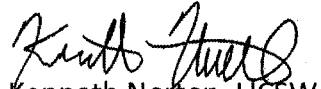
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of care model is consistent with our new 10-Year Mental Health Plan released in January of 2019 which calls for implementing and funding an early serious mental illness program as well as the infant mental health plan. This bill will further those efforts already underway as well as the recommendations of the 10-Year Mental Health Plan and on behalf of NAMI NH, I urge you to vote SB 716 as ought to pass.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully submitted,


Kenneth Norton, LICSW
Executive Director