



January 28, 2021

Honorable Kimberly Rice  
Children and Family Law 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 am a Licensed Independent Clinical Social Worker (LICSW) in the State of New Hampshire. I began my career in a residential group home for teenagers and worked for many years in a community mental health center as well as for a child serving agency focused on children at risk of being placed out of their homes. NAMI NH currently is working providing family peer support in the Children's System of Care (CSOC) Fast Forward Program. Perhaps more importantly, personally I am an adoptive parent through the Division of Children Youth and Families (DCYF) and have served as a licensed foster parent. On behalf of NAMI NH, I am here to offer our strong support for HB 254 regarding placement of minors in secure settings.

As you heard in testimony earlier today, by definition, children who have come under the care of the State as defined in this bill will already have experienced significant Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) The US Center for Disease Control notes that ACEs have a "tremendous impact on future violence victimization and perpetration, and lifelong health and opportunity." There is also significant research demonstrating the extraordinarily high number of youth in detention settings who have been diagnosed with a mental health condition/serious emotional disturbance (SED) separate from, or in addition to exposure to ACEs. This raises important questions of whether they are being detained because of their mental health condition, or if their condition had been adequately treated if they would have ended up there in the first place, or if they are receiving appropriate treatment for their mental health condition while they are being detained.

New Hampshire has taken great strides in recent years to develop a comprehensive system of care for children with serious emotional disturbance. This has been laid out under RSA 135-F as well as in the January 2019 Ten-Year Mental Health Plan. This includes the establishment of two Care Management Entities in the state who specialize in coordinating comprehensive community-based care for high-risk youth and families with the goal of preventing out of home placement and providing them the supports necessary to successfully and safely stay in their homes and communities.

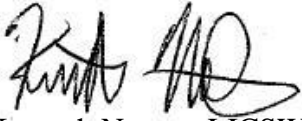
*Find Help, Find Hope.*

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NAMI NH believes that connecting children in juvenile placement with Care Management Entity will increase the likelihood of successful community transition and improved outcomes for the child and their family.

On behalf of NAMI NH, I strongly urge you to vote HB 254 as ought to pass. I am happy to answer any questions committee members have.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kenneth Norton', written in a cursive style.

Kenneth Norton, LICSW  
Executive Director

