



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 427 against the use of corporal punishment.

The negative effects of childhood trauma now commonly referred to as Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are extensively researched and well documented. Their impact lasts well beyond childhood. 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 are others who will testify today in more detail about the impact of ACEs. I will say that as an adoptive parent and as a former foster parent, I have witnessed first-hand the effects of early childhood ACE's/trauma and the impact it has on all aspects of an individual's life well into adulthood including school, work, friendships, intimate relationships, mental health/addiction, and overall physical health. This includes the complex cycle pointed out by the CDC of victimization and perpetration.

Almost by definition, children who have come under the care of the State as defined in this bill will already have experienced significant ACE's. There can be no circumstance which I can imagine where the use of corporal punishment, as defined, for a child in state custody would not be a significant added traumatic or adverse childhood event.

On behalf of NAMI NH, I strongly urge you to vote HB 427 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".

Kenneth Norton, LICSW
Executive Director

Find Help, Find Hope.

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