

January 29, 2021

Honorable Mark Pearson
House Health, Human Services and Elderly Affairs
107 North Main Street
Concord, New Hampshire 03301

Dear Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee,

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Kenneth Norton and I serve as Executive Director of NAMI NH, the National Alliance on Mental Illness. By way of background, I have family members with serious mental illness as well as co-occurring substance use disorders. I am also serving on the Telehealth Commission established under HB 1623 and was appointed to represent the patient perspective. On behalf of NAMI NH, I am here today to speak in opposition to HB 602.

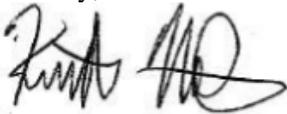
Although NAMI NH does not provide clinical mental health treatment per se, we do provide family peer support which is a Medicaid billable service under New Hampshire's Children System Of Care (SOC). In the interest of full transparency, during the pandemic we have been providing telehealth family peer support under some of the parameters established in the legislation passed during the last session.

Specifically related to this bill, NAMI NH objects to eliminating reimbursement for audio only services. Many people still do not have regular access to the internet and must rely on the telephone. For some that do have internet access, their computer may be located in a central part of the home where there is not privacy, or during the pandemic may be primarily used for remote school learning for children.

It is also NAMI NH's belief that this bill is premature, and the Telehealth Commission should be allowed time to more closely study the change in telehealth and gather data as a result of HB 1623 and to make future recommendations accordingly. I urge you to vote this bill as inexpedient to legislate at this point in time.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Kenneth Norton, LICSW
Executive Director

Find Help, Find Hope.