



February 16, 2021

Senator Sharon Carson
Senate Judiciary 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 with extensive experience working in community mental health. I have served as a subject matter expert in the areas of mental health as well as suicide prevention for the US Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), the Department of Defense (DOD) and the Veterans Administration (VA).

Closer to home, my involvement in providing training to law enforcement on responding to people with mental illness spans four decades, and I serve on the Governor's Commission on Courts and Corrections as well as on Governor Sununu's Law Enforcement, Accountability, Community and Transparency Commission. NAMI NH currently provides sixteen hours of mental health training to all full-time recruits attending the NH Police Academy.

On behalf of NAMI NH, I am here to speak in favor of Section IX of Senate Bill 134 regarding Mental Health Intervention Training.

A 2016 review and subsequent report by the NH Department of Justice on officer involved shootings indicated forty-five percent of those shootings in New Hampshire involved an individual with known mental illness. This is considerably higher than the national average of about twenty-five percent.

As a result of this, NAMI NH has been engaged in ongoing conversations about responding to individuals in a mental health crisis, use of deadly force, training and other related matters with former Attorney General MacDonald and other members of the Attorney General's Office, Commissioner Quinn from the New Hampshire Department of Safety, and his predecessor Commissioner Barthelmes as well as others policy leaders in the state about the need to enhance training for law enforcement in responding to individuals in a mental health crisis.

For the past three years, under a federal grant NAMI NH has been collaborating with the NH Department of Safety to provide a forty-hour Crisis Intervention Team Training (CIT) to NH State Police as well as Fire and Emergency Medical Services personnel. Also known as the Memphis Model, CIT training is recognized internationally and was developed over 30 years in

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response to officer involved shootings of people with mental illness. After a series national high-profile officer involved shootings, President Obama issued an Executive Order creating The President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing. Their report in 2016 has served as a blueprint by many members of law enforcement, as well communities, in implementing police reform. Their report identified six major pillars for improving law enforcement response and included in one of those pillars was the recommendation that every police recruit and every law enforcement officer be provided Crisis Intervention Team Training.

At NAMI NH's CIT Training with the NH Department of Safety, we have a certified CIT Training Facilitator who coordinates over 20 subject matter experts as faculty to present in-depth information on mental illness, de-escalation skills, and techniques and strategies for responding to people in a mental health crisis. The curriculum includes extensive role playing and rehearsal with real life scenarios and most of the "actors" being people with mental illness or their family members who have personally experienced a mental health crisis requiring law enforcement response and who NAMI NH has trained to serve in these roles as part of CIT Training.


A significant portion of CIT Training also includes a focus on their own wellness and resilience and what mental health supports are available to law enforcement in New Hampshire. Rates of suicide among law enforcement are significantly higher than the general population and currently exceed the number of law enforcement officers who die in the line of duty. Sadly, New Hampshire has experienced several of these tragic law enforcement deaths in the past few years.

The demand for CIT Training has been quite high and grant funding is due to run out in September. NAMI NH has also been working closely with Director Scippa from Police Standards and Training and the Governor's office regarding this legislation and to avoid potential proprietary issues with CIT, is calling this training Mental Health Intervention Training. If passed, the legislation will go to PSTC specifically to offer this type of intensive training and make it available to certified officers from throughout New Hampshire.

On behalf of NAMI, NH, I strongly urge you to vote SB 134 as ought to pass.

Thank you for your consideration, I am happy to answer any questions committee members have

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kenneth Norton', written over a light blue horizontal line.

Kenneth Norton, LICSW
Executive Director