

February 3, 2022

Honorable Chairman Rick Ladd
House Education Committee
Legislative Office Building
North State Street, Concord, NH 03301

RE: NAMI NH Opposition of HB 1198

Honorable Chairman Ladd and Committee Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Holly Stevens, and I am the Director of Public Policy at NAMI New Hampshire, the National Alliance on Mental Illness. NAMI NH is a non-profit, non-partisan, grassroots organization whose mission is to improve the lives of all people impacted by mental illness and suicide through support, education and advocacy. On behalf of NAMI NH, I am here today to speak in opposition to HB 1198, relative to rules of the department of education concerning culture and climate in schools.

Schools are a community within a community. While we would like to think of their purpose as solely to promote academic excellence, it is important to acknowledge that the learning environment and the ability of schools to teach students is greatly impacted by the social environment of the school. Governor Sununu's School Safety Task Force (Task Force), which NAMI NH served on, recognized the importance of this in their 2018 report which emphasized that school culture is the critical first step to preventing school violence.

Per the Task Force's 2018 report (see original for citations within):

A school's culture is the set of norms that defines the behavior inside a school, and largely determines what is considered socially acceptable behavior between classmates, and between staff and students. Culture is significantly important to the social, emotional, and academic success of students and staff and is linked to multiple student behavioral, academic, health and social-emotional outcomes. Specifically, school culture is a significant predictor of dropout rates, absenteeism and truancy, suspension, drug use, and violent, aggressive behavior. A positive school culture is closely associated with prosocial motivation, academic motivation, self-esteem, conflict resolution, and altruistic behavior.

A positive school culture has also been linked to reducing incidences of bullying, which is frequently associated with an assailant's decision to engage in a violent act. Additionally, research suggests that students who feel safe in schools perform better than peers who

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do not feel safe. A 2010 study correlates a student's perceived sense of security with an 18 percent increase in student score performance.

As mentioned above, a positive school culture has been linked to reducing the incidences of bullying in schools. Not only is bullying associated with school violence, but it is also associated with high levels of suicide-related behavior. While there is not a direct causal link, involvement in bullying, along with other risk factors, increases the chance a young person will engage in suicide related behaviors.¹ Currently, suicide is the second leading cause of death of youth and young adults in our state ages 10-34 (see chart from the US Center for Disease Control).



NH Leading Causes of Death: 2015-2019

Rank	Age Groups											All Ages
	<1	1-4	5-9	10-14	15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+		
1	Short Gestation 33	Unintentional Injury 19	Malignant Neoplasms 11	Malignant Neoplasms 11	Unintentional Injury 201	Unintentional Injury 816	Unintentional Injury 442	Malignant Neoplasms 856	Malignant Neoplasms 2,522	Heart Disease 11,250	Malignant Neoplasms 13,328	
2	Congenital Anomalies 29	Congenital Anomalies 19	Unintentional Injury 11	Suicide 71	Suicide 162	Suicide 182	Malignant Neoplasms 211	Unintentional Injury 658	Heart Disease 1,365	Malignant Neoplasms 10,137	Heart Disease 13,416	
3	Maternal Pregnancy Comp. 15	Homicide 11	Homicide 11	Unintentional Injury 11	Heart Disease 20	Malignant Neoplasms 62	Suicide 195	Heart Disease 937	Unintentional Injury 484	Chronic Low Respiratory Disease 3,126	Unintentional Injury 4,488	
4	Placenta Cord Membranes 15	Influenza & Pneumonia 15	Benign Neoplasms 11	Congenital Anomalies 11	Malignant Neoplasms 18	Heart Disease 49	Heart Disease 118	Suicide 272	Chronic Low Respiratory Disease 397	Alzheimer's Disease 2,267	Chronic Low Respiratory Disease 3,841	
5	Respiratory Distress 10	Malignant Neoplasms 10	Congenital Anomalies 10	Benign Neoplasms 10	Homicide 14	Liver Disease 15	Liver Disease 68	Liver Disease 169	Diabetes Mellitus 277	Cerebrovascular 2,200	Cerebrovascular 2,486	
6	Circulatory System Disease 10	Diabetes Mellitus 10	Heart Disease 10	Chronic Low Respiratory Disease 10	Chronic Low Respiratory Disease 13	Homicide 13	Diabetes Mellitus 31	Diabetes Mellitus 101	Liver Disease 277	Unintentional Injury 1,546	Alzheimer's Disease 2,296	
7	Intrauterine Hypoxia 10	Heart Disease 10	Acute Bronchitis 10	Influenza & Pneumonia 10	Congenital Anomalies 10	Cerebrovascular 11	Homicide 25	Chronic Low Respiratory Disease 81	Suicide 253	Diabetes Mellitus 1,225	Diabetes Mellitus 1,646	
8	Bacterial Sepsis 10	---	Disease Of Appendix 10	Nephritis 10	Cerebrovascular 10	Congenital Anomalies 10	Cerebrovascular 17	Cerebrovascular 73	Cerebrovascular 175	Influenza & Pneumonia 1,070	Suicide 1,271	
9	Unintentional Injury 10	---	---	Pneumonia 10	Diabetes Mellitus 10	Diabetes Mellitus 10	Chronic Low Respiratory Disease 16	Septicemia 36	Nephritis 84	Nephritis 810	Influenza & Pneumonia 1,167	
10	SIDS 10	---	---	---	Four Tied 10	Two Tied 10	Congenital Anomalies 11	Congenital Anomalies 24	Septicemia 63	Parkinson's Disease 786	Nephritis 938	

Source: CDC WISQARS, 2014 -2018



Any action New Hampshire can take to reduce the incidences of suicide and violence

among young people is incredibly important. Our state has a vested interest in assisting the schools in cultivating a positive, safe culture and climate throughout each school system. HB 1198 would prevent the Department of Education from doing this important work.

For these reasons, NAMI NH requests the committee vote inexpedient to legislate on HB 1198. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this legislation. I would be happy to answer any questions which you have.

Sincerely,

Holly A. Stevens, Esq.

¹ The Relationship Between Bullying and Suicide: What We Know and What it Means for Schools, The CDC National Center for Injury Prevention and Control Division of Violence Prevention, April 2014.