April 6, 2022

Honorable Chair Rick Ladd
House Education Committee
Legislate Office Building Room 207
North Main St., Concord, NH 03301

RE: NAMI NH Support for SB 234

Dear Chair 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 NH, 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 favor of SB 234, requiring student identification cards to include the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline.

Over the past decade, already high suicide rates have been rising in the United States and in New Hampshire. Below is a chart detailing the leading causes of death in the US. This chart is the product of the National Center for Injury Prevention and Control at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. It shows that the second leading cause of death for 10–24-year-old individuals is suicide. This is the exact age range that this legislation is targeting.

Additionally, according to Health Affairs, between 2007 and 2018, suicide increased 57.4 percent in 10–24-year-olds. In one survey of high school students, one in three youth reported persistent feelings of sadness or hopelessness and one in five had seriously considered suicide.  

More precisely, results from the 2019 Youth Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System show that 18.8% of high school students reported suicide ideation.

school students seriously considered attempting suicide and 8.9% attempted suicide.

SB 234 offers a simple solution that has the potential to save lives. Suicide phone lines provide timely and constant access to a resource that provides support and comfort to those who are actively suicidal. Printing the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline on the back of a student identification card is a great way to assure that this age group has access to this very important resource. For these reasons, NAMI NH urges the committee vote to recommend ought to pass for SB 234.

Sincerely,

Holly A. Stevens, Esq.